

Perception in the Poetry of D.H. Lawrence

Thesis
presented to the Faculty of Arts
of the University of Zurich
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

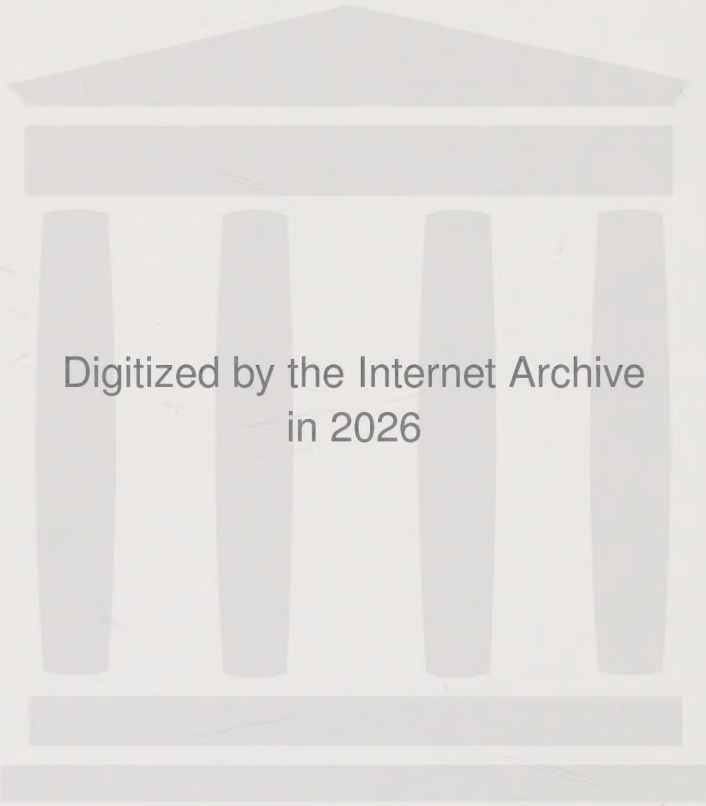
by
Jillian Francesca de Vries-Mason
of Locarno/TI

Accepted on the Recommendation of Professor Henri Petter Ph.D.



PETER LANG
Berne and Frankfurt/Main
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To my parents

When it comes to living, we live through our instincts and our intuitions. Instinct makes me run from little over-earnest ladies; instinct makes me sniff the lime blossom and reach for the darkest cherry. But it is intuition which makes me feel the uncanny glassiness of the lake this afternoon, the sulkiness of the mountains, the vividness of near green in thunder-sun, the young man in bright blue trousers lightly tossing the grass from the scythe, the elderly man in a boater stiffly shoving his scythe-strokes, both of them sweating in the silence of the intense light.

(D.H. Lawrence, "Insouciance", *Phoenix II*, p. 534)

But by intuition alone can man *really* be aware of man, or of the living, substantial world. By intuition alone can man live and know either woman or world, and by intuition alone can he bring forth again images of magic awareness which we call art.

(D.H. Lawrence, "Introduction to these Paintings", *Phoenix*, p. 556)

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INTRODUCTION

Lawrence's message, highly interesting as it is, has tended to monopolize the interest of his critics; but it is time for it to be brought into perspective sufficiently to permit an unbiased evaluation of his art. We have been showered with thematic analyses of his works, some of which are unfortunately laden with biographical detail and frequently mix psychology and literary criticism. There is, on the other hand, hardly any structural or formal criticism of any significance to be found in this jungle of thematic comment. This situation applies as much to Lawrence's novels as to his less widely studied poetry.¹ Only recently has the call for the long due formal approach, including the analysis of his free verse prosody, been followed, and there is certainly still a great deal to do in that field.² The present study is consequently not principally concerned with substance; its approach is primarily technical. However, in its final analyses, leading to the substantiation of its argument, it includes, as I believe all serious criticism should, both thematic and formal criteria.

The basic contention of this work is that, where there is at the core of a Lawrencian poem the presentation of perceptual truths of whatever kind, or the expression of substance in perceptual terms, the poetry generally succeeds.

This, of course, implies the evaluative character of this study. However, I concede that my approach is only one of the possible choices; I do not deny personal interpretation and opinion the rightful share they have in any critical work.

Parallel to this contention, as a further outcome of this study, runs the argument that there is in Lawrence's poetry a conspicuous growth of poetical power, a steady advance towards the achievement of the *Last Poems*, through the proliferation of perceptual elements and increasing skill in handling the various techniques they entail. This, implicitly, accounts for the chronological procedure in this work, and also explains why I generally consider the original, unaltered versions of the early poems in the first chapter. As perception in Lawrence's poetical work proceeds from a frequently descriptive level to a visionary quality, translations into perceptual terms obviously become essential to the poetry and function as thematic key elements. The correspondence of form to theme in the individual poem, particularly with respect to these key elements, is in any case the final objective criterion for its significance and value. I will also show, as evidence of my contention on the negative side, the failure of abstract kinds of expression in Lawrencian poetry, entailing the perils of formlessness and destructive predominance of the theme.

By perceptual elements I mean things or properties that can be apprehended with the senses, that can be seen, heard, touched, smelt, or tasted. Such elements, though they may

serve noumenal purposes, belong to the phenomenal or physical world. The prevailing preceptual mode in Lawrence's poetry (and prose, for that matter) is the visual mode, involving colour (including light and dark), texture, form and motion. A few critics have commented upon the quality and wealth of his visual imagination,³ hardly surprising in the work of a writer who was also a painter and who believed that "the imagination is that form of complete consciousness in which predominates the intuitive awareness of forms, images, the *physical* awareness".⁴ Now if perceptual elements are looked at in relation to substance, their visual quality, their level ("realistic-descriptive", metaphoric, symbolic), and their semantic impact in the poem become relevant. Considered in relation to form, these elements lead to questions of imitation and reflection, onomatopoeia, rhythm and speed. In viewing the perceptual elements, finally, in respect of both substance and form, my aim will be to find semantic, syntactic and formal parallelisms, key terms and relevant metrical patterns, symmetries and correspondences. This is not meant to be a systematic arrangement of analytical criteria; it is rather an enumeration of relevant critical factors which may occur (and sometimes overlap) in a poem, according to its structure. I am thus obviously concerned, above all, with the questions of *where* and *how* substance is conveyed by means of perceptual elements, and with what effect on the poetry. It is not my purpose to analyse the quality, the *what* of the Lawrencian feelings, thoughts and theories as expressed in the perceptual elements, but rather

to examine the distribution of these elements, their position and function in the poetry. Meaning is relevant only, but then intrinsically so, in the indispensable analysis of the selected individual poem as an independent entity, which is always the final touchstone in this work. The method of finding connecting links between formal and thematic elements may vary from one poem to another, as starting points must depend on the structure of the individual poem. Thus the method will be open, even teleological, but will in every instance strive to include all analytical components. Where the establishment of correspondences seems impossible, however, I will not fail to apply the necessary criticism. This flexible method is an attempt to give a poem every chance — Lawrence's poems sometimes need it.

If there are cases in which I consider only parts of a poem, the reason is usually that I am using a passage or stanza to illustrate a certain perceptual quality or technique, or that the poem as a whole is not worth closer attention. This will occur most frequently in my first chapter.

Though I do not, in analysis, include any thematic or other elements which are external to the single poem, and though I am not primarily interested in underlying thoughts or experiences, there are statements made by Lawrence in his poetry and in other works concerning the pictorial arts, the nature of seeing and its evolutions, and the importance of these for the creative act, which I do discuss, as they

are exceedingly helpful as an illustration of the perceptual quality in Lawrence's poetry. The inclusion of these statements serves to demonstrate the relevance of the perceptual element for Lawrence in life and art, and to show the obvious and purposeful validity of my approach with respect to Lawrence's thought; moreover, his theories are examined as to their potential realization in the poetry itself. The function of these statements, however, is strictly descriptive and explanatory; in no case are they used as arguments or in the conclusive analysis.

NOTES

¹One of the best works on Lawrence's poetry is Sandra M. Gilbert's mainly thematical study *Acts of Attention: The Poems of D.H.Lawrence* (New York, 1972).

²See Hebe R.Bair, "Free Verse Prosody: The Poetry of D.H.Lawrence", doctoral dissertation (University of Arkansas, 1978).

³Anaïs Nin was one of the first to note the importance and effect of sensory apprehension in Lawrence's language and style; cf. *D.H.Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study* (London, 1961 – first published in Paris, 1932).

For an excellent analysis of the visual element and its relevance to success in the novels see Keith Alldritt, *The Visual Imagination of D.H.Lawrence* (London, 1971).

See also: Del I.Janik, "Toward 'Thingness': Cézanne's Paintings and Lawrence's Poetry", in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 19 (1973), 119-28.

⁴D.H.Lawrence, "Introduction to these Paintings", *Phoenix*, p. 574.

CHAPTER I

EARLY POEMS: THE HARDENING OUTLINES

There is much diversity in Lawrence's first and largest volume, which figures under the heading "Rhyming Poems". This title is indeed indicative of one of the most prominent and unfortunate characteristics of many of the 150 poems it contains (not including the juvenilia, other unpublished poems, drafts and variants, which are almost as bulky again).¹ Rhyme, often the sole ingredient borrowed from the laws of traditional verse, is here the cause of many unhappy and clumsy turns of phrase; violence is done to metre and word order, bad and incorrect syntax occurs, and there are many far-fetched metaphors and similes apparently chosen for the sake of rhyme. In fact, the young poet – and even the older, for that matter – obviously had the greatest of trouble with rhyming, and I agree with A. Alvarez that "the need to rhyme is like a wedge driven between the object and the word".² Naturally, inefficiently applied formal rules frequently also distort the expression of substance, i.e. rhyming necessities entail a semantic afterclap.

However, it is not only the forced adjustment of substance to form which had destructive effects in this rather chaotically experimental volume, but also the conventionality and lack of originality of much of the imagery. If we consider for instance the substantial number of poems that I call, with Lawrence, "compositions", including

most of the juvenilia and some of the first printed poems such as "Twilight", "Dreams Old and Nascent", "Suburbs on a Hazy Day" or "Sigh No More", it is manifest from the second-handedness of many images and visual metaphors that there is a good deal of conventionality of expression in them. If there is anything in these poems justifying W.H. Auden's remark that "reading Lawrence's early poems, one is continually struck by the originality of the sensibility" it is certainly not apparent on the level of expression.³ Perception is hardly ever direct and observational, nor in any sense independent; it serves to illustrate a mood or feeling, yet it is still not personal but rather fashionably poetic. The subjects of the "compositions" move in traditional grooves: morning and evening, the seasons, nostalgia; there is the conventional love lyric and the exuberant nature poem.

Let us consider the first two poems Lawrence probably wrote, "Champions" (CP, p. 855) and "Guelder Roses" (CP, pp. 855-56); of these he himself later, aware of their defects, said that "most young ladies would have done better" (Foreword to *Collected Poems*, CP, p. 849). These are examples in which perception is not only artificial but also blurred, formless and dull, with a Pre-Raphaelite pallor:

The unclouded seas of bluebells have ebbed and passed
And the pale stars of forget-me-nots have climbed
to the last
Rung of their life-ladders' fragile heights.
Now the trees with interlocked hands and arms up-
lifted hold back the light.

("Champions", ll. 1-4)

The guelder rose-bush is hung with coronets
Gently issuing from the massèd green;
Pale dreamy chaplets; a grey nun-sister sets
Such on the virgin hair of dead sixteen.

("Guelder Roses", ll. 1-4)

I need hardly comment on the precious poetical similes and derivative banality of the expression prevailing in spite of the Lawrencian theme of purity and sterility. Many "compositions" contain archaisms, a conventional poetic phraseology or some out-of-place scientific terms, and even Lawrence's "fictional" poems have a much more powerful personal impact. It is almost as if the young poet believed the originality of descriptive passages to lie in the metaphors they are heaped with; often even the descriptions are used metaphorically themselves. There are many instances of revision where he obviously later tried to concretize this imagery, though by no means always with success. Whereas in his early novelistic exploits he contented himself with - often beautiful - direct, increasingly realistic descriptions, there is an obvious tendency in the poems to achieve "sophistication" by frequently multiple layers of metaphor. This is of course, ultimately, a sign of insecurity on the poet's part. Often, this pseudo-poetical sophistication leads to an unconvincing artificiality, as in "The Fall of Day" (CP, pp. 856-57):

Torn wings of flame are wafting down the sky
Pinioned like sweeping scythes now idly hanging at rest;
The soft clustered shoulder-feathers in rosy confusion lie
Helpless; another day has flown too high
And falls wingless, blood streaming through its yellow
hair, headlong into the west.

(ll. 1-5)

The enjambement is awkward, too, and the last line inordinately long; rhyme again demands its tribute.

In a more specifically imitative poem such as "Dreams Old and Nascent" (thoroughly discussed by Sandra Gilbert, who detects a Swinburnian style and a Tennysonian sentiment)⁴ the conventional *fin-de-siècle* mistiness of the perceptual metaphors and the coloured yet pale unsubstantiality are conspicuous (I quote from the early version, CP, p. 923):

Over the bygone, hushèd years
Streaming back where the mist distils
Into forgetfulness: soft sailing waters, where fears
No longer shake: where the silk sail fills
With the unfelt breeze that ebbs over the seas, when
the storm
Of living has passed, on and on
Through the coloured iridescence that swims in the warm
Wake of the hushèd tumult now spent and gone
Drifts my boat, wistfully lapsing after
The mist of receding tears, and the echo of laughter.

(ll. 17-26)

There is really nothing new at all in these images, nor in the sentiment they express. Perhaps this was meant to be thus; but if so, is the poem worth while?

A small group of love poems, however, including "Kisses in the Train", "Birdcage Walk", "In a Boat", "Tease" and several of the Helen poems such as "The Appeal" or "Mystery", succeed in their consciously imitative manner. Metre and rhyme are efficiently dealt with for once, and the success of these poems lies indeed mainly in their dexterously handled form, corresponding to the *allegro con spirito*

of "Tease" (with a touch of the mockery later sharpened in *Pansies*) or to the exotic *fin-de-siècle* decadence of "Mystery", though certainly not in any innovation in the imagery or any originality of substance.

It is when Lawrence takes his poetical material from personal experience that the greatest formal problems arise (but also the most powerful poems are created); at the same time, the necessity of finding new — particularly perceptual — terms of expression becomes evident. The "young man" has his formal stumbling blocks and his reticence (done away with rather harshly in the revisions); but these faults are often less the cause of failure than an incapacity to break away from a derivative, dead kind of imagery and a conventional use of perceptual elements.

"Study" (*CP*, pp. 40-41), the first poem Lawrence tried to get published (and no wonder he failed), has a personal theme, yet rings with a definitely false note. The persona — a student of chemistry, schoolroom-bound, but wishing to escape to the woods to meet his girl — is a self-important and sentimental young man. The failure of this poem is obviously in great part due, apart from frightful rhymes ("hazel/ways'll"), enjambements and bracket constructions, to the second-hand quality of the expression. What of the conventional quality of "the long mellow note of the blackbird", of the awkward "unclasping hands of hazel", the mawkish vagueness of "some ways'll/ All be sweet with white and blue violet", or even the commonness of "on the green wood's edge a shy girl hovers"?

The "Letter from Town" poems are of a similar genre; language is either too "poetically" high-strung ("and I want to smite in anger the barren rock of each waterless brow"), at times reminiscent of Meredith ("where violets secretly darken the earth"), or displays a shallow imagery ("the woods of the twilight") (*CP*, p. 57). Poems such as "Scent of Irises" or "Last Words to Miriam", though more directly personal and emotionally powerful, are marred by the same defects. "Last Words to Miriam" was repeatedly revised by Lawrence; Harry T. Moore believes the changes were in the direction of frankness, and Vivian de Sola Pinto regards the poem as "charged with the deepest and most intimate feeling" and holds it to be an excellent illustration of Lawrence's preoccupation with form.⁵ Yet in my opinion there are, apart from unforgivable formal deficiencies due to the tyranny of rhyme, various perceptual metaphors between the mostly revised direct statements (very rarely successful in Lawrence's poetry); these, instead of unifying the poem, make it fall apart altogether by their diversity and lack of correlation. This is a major defect of the perceptual metaphors in many early poems: they are essentially irrelevant to the theme and the poem as a whole, being either merely traditional and hollow or disconnected and fortuitous, frequently chosen for the sake of form.

There is, however, a tendency in some of the early poems to the direct rendering of perceptual elements, involving a kind of seeing which is more observationally realistic and accordingly more clear-cut. Lawrence's delight and

interest in nature which he shared with the Romantics — though his knowledge of nature (particularly of plants and flowers) was demonstrably more exact and deeper than theirs — certainly contributed much to the development of his descriptive powers. His keen and extraordinary capacity for observation, closely linked with his sense of wonder at nature and all living things ("I think *wonder* is one of the finest words in our language," the young Lawrence tells Jessie) is manifest already in his early verse.⁶ Often, though, the aptness of the perception has not yet found its corresponding formal expression and is strongly reminiscent of the nature descriptions in the novels except for the often irrelevantly superimposed and strained rhymes and line arrangements. The following stanza from the early version of "The Wild Common" (CP, p. 907) shows the struggle between the importance of perceptual truth and the requirements of traditional form, resulting in inconsequential rhymes fitted to long but swift run-on lines (which Hebe R. Bair calls "embryonic free verse")⁷:

Rabbits, handfuls of brown earth lie
Low-rounded on the mournful grass they have bitten
down to the quick.
Are they asleep?—Are they alive?—Now see, when I
Move my arms the hill bursts and heaves under their
spurting kick.

(ll. 5-8)

"Love on the Farm", a poem with excellent observational qualities suffers from the same formal defects, as do many school poems, visually and psychologically true as they are. Yet reading the first two lines of "The Wild Common"

we are immediately struck by the correspondence of sound and image, in spite of rhymes (though there is considerably less substantiality and form than in the second stanza quoted above):

The quick sparks on the gorse bushes are leaping,
Little jets of sunlight-texture imitating flame;

(ll. 1-2)

Harry T. Moore penetratingly remarks on these lines that they have "the bright livingness, and the quick movement of the later verse, and they forecast its types of rhythm and imagery".⁸ In fact, metre enhances the dynamic visual elements by double strong stress ("quick sparks": / /) and reflects their movement by a trochaic pattern ("little jets of sunlight-texture imitating flame": / x / x / x / x / x / x /), supported by an accumulation of onomatopoeic plosives [p,t,k] . The poet is, in his turn, imitating substance by formal devices. It is difficult to analyse such mimetic verse any further than in relation to its immediate statement, short and isolated as it is in the poem; but it certainly constitutes the beginnings of what I call Lawrence's *onomatopoeic dynamism or dynamic form*.

Many perceptual passages in the early poems contain, like that quoted above, a wealth of light and colour. This, together with a highly adjectival style and an as yet general absence of symbol, point to the influence of Impressionism.⁹ This influence acted in various ways on Lawrence's poetry. Most certainly there is the impressionistic tendency, which must be attributed mainly to the

Georgians, of using an imprecise, conventional vocabulary and vague imagery, as noted before. Jürgen Donnerstag mentions the preference for perceptual terms like "white, glimmering, luminous, pale", evocative of a shimmering, impressionistic world.¹⁰ On the whole, though, the Georgian influence was not substantial, for in spite of the often extremely skilled verse of these poets (consider for instance Rupert Brooke's "Granchester" as a typically Georgian poem), there was often a thinness of substance in their work, lacking a realistic or deepening vision, as compared with Lawrence's mostly more powerful lyrics. The technique, frequently found also in Lawrence's later poems, of repeated retouching and slight modification of focus and detail may originally also have been a characteristic of the impressionistic style.

Yet there is still another, more salutary influence than that of the Georgians, of immediate interest here, which can be seen in poems describing scenes and landscapes in a manner seemingly borrowed from the technique of impressionistic painting. Of course we are reminded, at this point, that Lawrence had been painting for years before he started writing, and that at one time he had even envisaged a career as a painter.¹¹ I am thinking, for instance, of "Parliament Hill in the Evening":

The houses fade in a melt of mist
Blotching the thick, soiled air
With reddish places that still resist
The Night's slow care.

The hopeless, wintry twilight fades,
The city corrodes out of sight
As the body corrodes when death invades
That citadel of delight.

Now verdigris smoulderings softly spread
Through the shroud of the town, as slow
Night-lights hither and thither shed
Their ghastly glow.

(CP, p. 142)

Though the verse is comparatively tight formally, with a regular metrical pattern, the poem is thematically slight, with little expressive force and a few awkward tournures probably owing to rhyming necessities. Its interest for this work lies in its perceptuality: the poem consists almost entirely of visual elements; it is a painting in motion created out of patches of colour and light, and with a conspicuous absence of sharp contours. Lawrence here attempts (as in several poems discussed above) to do what in "Introduction to these Paintings" he believes the Impressionists did: he escapes "from the tyranny of solidity and the menace of massform" to the "shifting lights and shadows, all coloured".¹² The only not directly visual simile in the poem, the darkening town compared to the decomposition of a dead body, is least convincing.

"Corot" (CP, p. 68), with its fairly regular metre, is a successful poem relying mostly on visual perception for its statement and describing the artist's painting and style. Corot's art is the objective correlative, the external visual link upon which the poem's theme of the "luminous purpose of Life" is based; and at the same time it is the subject on the descriptive level. The images

presented are in fact full of that "pure luminosity and floating shadow" Lawrence saw in impressionistic landscapes, divested of "all sharp-rimmed substance".¹³ The interpretation and intuitive appreciation of the painter's art derive from observation and perception, finally going beyond the visual and becoming vision (this is essentially the technique of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*). I quote from the revised version, which is slightly shortened and tightened; the accomplishment of the verse speaks for itself:

The trees rise taller and taller, lifted
On a subtle rush of cool grey flame
That issuing out of the east has sifted
The spirit from each leaf's frame.

For the trailing, leisurely rapture of life
Drifts dimly forward, easily hidden
By bright leaves uttered aloud; and strife
Of shapes by a hard wind ridden...

Ah listen, for silence is not lonely!
Imitate the magnificent trees
That speak no word of their rapture, but only
Breathe largely the luminous breeze.

(ll. 1-8, 33-36)

"After School" (*CP*, p. 867), one of the juvenilia, a rather immature poem with long, irregular lines, though luckily little rhymed, is also of some interest: the persona's glance through a window into a lamp-lit room, and the scene, a perfect tableau, an idyll described in exclusively visual terms, perhaps rather hazily sweet, lead immediately to the persona's own situation:

And I looked in a room where the lamp, as a moon in
mist
Shone sweetly through yellow silk; a man full in the
light

Looked up, and the words moved like a smile from his
 lips.
 A woman came into the glow from out of the shadowy light
 Leans over to read his work, and her dark head dips
 Deep into the heart of the light, the centre of a star
 There in the heart of a star set far off in the night
 She turned and kissed him, and his eyes were the soul
 of the star,
 And the white nape of her neck was the beauty of the
 star
 And I, in immeasurable night, looked on from afar,—
 afar!

(ll. 6-15)

The antagonism of dark and light is brought into a psycho-
 logical context. The gleaming quality and *chiaroscuro* of
 this perception is similar to that of the mature poet's
 godly glimpses, and indeed the experience related in this
 poem of the tenderness and intimacy of love may have had
 the same impact for the young poet as did later the ex-
 perience of the divine.

"The North Country" (CP, p. 148), a poem commenting
 on the Pansy theme of industrialism, using quite similar
 images such as the wheel or the concept of man's mechanical
 will-lessness as a result of the machine, starts off with
 a scene in the countryside. The human reality is attained
 through the evocation of a visual perception. There is
 again an intense preoccupation with colour and light in
 the first stanza:

In another country, black poplars shake themselves
 over a pond,
 And rooks and the rising smoke-waves scatter and wheel
 from the works beyond:
 The air is dark with sulphur, the grass is a darker
 green,
 And people darkly invested with purple move palpable
 through the scene.

(ll. 1-4)

Though this picture still draws from the "purely optical, visual truth" attributed to Impressionism by Lawrence, it has at the same time a realistic, plastic quality, there is no fusion or confusion, and certainly none of the Pre-Raphaelite pallor, and it accordingly leads to an acute human reality.¹⁴ In some poems there is indeed, as I will show, an emancipation from Impressionism to a terser visual realism, leading to and paralleled by a more personal and powerful apprehension of the invisible, inner side of things, the expression of feelings and conflicts.

There is a movement which must have had its influence on the young poet in his effort to find a simpler language and a clearer and keener visual quality; I am thinking of Imagism. Several of Lawrence's poems appeared in Imagist anthologies; idiosyncratic and wilful as Lawrence was, however, and unwilling to follow any credo or theory except his own, he was never really an Imagist and never wanted to be associated with the movement.¹⁵ Yet it is interesting to note that the poems with imagistic leanings or features are generally successful.

In the principles of Imagism, formulated in the preface to the 1915 anthology *Some Imagist Poets*, we find affinities to Lawrence's own theories. The two postulates - to use the language of common speech, but always to employ the exact word, and to create new rhythms as the expression of new moods, and not to copy old rhythms - together with the promotion of free verse, are ideas pointing to the

preface of *Look! We Have Come Through!* and to the poetry of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, but they are not yet realized in most of the early poems. Of immediate relevance here is the Imagist call for a poetry which is hard and clear, never blurred or indefinite, and not dealing in vague generalities; a striving for this quality can, in fact, be detected in Lawrence's more powerful early poems. The last desideratum of the Imagist credo, however, is frequently missing in Lawrence's poems: the belief that concentration is of the very essence of poetry. Usually there is a lack of crystallization and a novelist's verbosity and circumstantial detail in the poems, and seldom is the poet able to produce that poetry of economical concentration on a central image. The absence of the compact image or symbol expressive of feeling in the predominantly narrative or impressionistic-descriptive early poetry is certainly conspicuous.

A few poems which might be termed Imagist in a wider sense, however, succeed, and not least because of their conciseness and concentration on a single image or object. The three short, consecutive poems (noted by Gilbert, p. 35) "Aware", "A Pang of Reminiscence" and "A White Blossom", associating the moon, with varying intensity and explicitness, with a hopeless lost love, are Imagist, if not in form, at least in their perceptual focus. I quote "A White Blossom":

A tiny moon as small and white as a single jasmine flower
Leans all alone above my window, on night's wintry bower,

Liquid as a lime-tree blossom, soft as brilliant water
or rain
She shines, the first white love of my youth, passion-
less and in vain.

(CP, p. 67)

In spite of the inevitable similes and rhymes and a comparative absence of contours, there is yet an Imagist conciseness and limpidity of theme in these lines. All the same, compared to the poised beauty and composure of many Imagist poems, Lawrence's verse is often rather ruffled and personal.

There is a group of war poems, however, which appeared in *Bay* (written later than most of the *Early Poems*, in 1918), containing some seemingly aloof and impersonal pieces, "examples", as Glenn Hughes believes, "of this poet's most imagistic writing".¹⁶ Such are "Ruination" or "Bombardment", which I quote in its entirety:

The Town has opened to the sun.
Like a flat red lily with a million petals
She unfolds, she comes undone.

A sharp sky brushes upon
The myriad glittering chimney-tips
As she gently exhales to the sun.

Hurrying creatures run
Down the labyrinth of the sinister flower.
What is it they shun?

A dark bird falls from the sun.
It curves in a rush to the heart of the vast
Flower: the day has begun.

(CP, p. 166)

The image of the town-flower is hard, clear and pervasive, and expression is contained: it is almost reduced to the essential elements necessary to describe the scene, and

strong as the feeling behind the poem might have been (it is known how Lawrence hated war), there is a detached composure in these lines; the actual horror of the scene is expressed by way of a metaphoric image. Had Lawrence not insisted on the repetitive rhyme scheme and attended more to metre instead, the poem might have turned out a great deal better.

Imagism, in other instances, also helped the poet to get away from conventional verse forms. "After the Opera" illustrates this: it combines a bright and psychologically true image, quite different from the impressionistic items discussed in its physical presence and outlined concreteness (though again the novelist cannot resist dramatizing), with the beginnings of free verse:

Down the stone stairs
Girls with their large eyes wide with tragedy
Lift looks of shocked and momentous emotion up at me.
And I smile.

Ladies
Stepping like birds with their bright and pointed feet
Peer anxiously forth, as if for a boat to carry them
 out of the wreckage;
And among the wreck of the theatre crowd
I stand and smile.
They take tragedy so becomingly;
Which pleases me.

But when I meet the weary eyes
The reddened, aching eyes of the bar-man with thin arms,
I am glad to go back to where I came from.

(CP, pp. 71-72)

There is a discernible relevant metrical structure in the poem. Whereas the lines containing the image (ll. 1-3, 5-7) accumulate strong stresses (excellently reflecting the solemn, tragic mood described), and are otherwise

predominantly dactylic or trochaic, starting with a stressed syllable, the more colloquial iambic and anapæstic pattern of the short lines describing the persona's reaction and comment stands in clear contrast to this ("and I smile": x x / , "I stand and smile": x / x / , "which pleases me": x / x x). The last stanza, in which amusement gives way to critical observation, carries the semantic impact, the message of the poem, which is social criticism and – implicitly – criticism of pseudo-emotions. Conspicuously, in the last line, the metre breaks up into the irregular, prose-like "I am glad to go back to where I came from". Indeed it is as if the poet-persona, confronted with harsh reality as opposed to the realm of art, is unable to answer, on the level of expression, to the formal requirements of art any longer. Thus the wish to escape into art on the semantic level is countered by the slip into "prose reality" on the formal level, and this brings the theme of the poem, which is the antagonism of life and art, into focus.

The two poems on his landlady's baby are also formally loose (though less than "After the Opera"). "Baby Running Barefoot" is an enchanting and unaffected portrayal of a baby and its play in the grass. In the final version Lawrence added rhymes and introduced a more regular metrical pattern. The poem may have lost some of its grace as a result; on the other hand, the formal tightening proved salutary in some instances, as in the last couplet. It is a description of the baby's feet – the poem's central image – in the persona's hands, and originally there was

repetition and the adjective-burdened eloquence of a too long line: "Cool as syringa buds/Cool and firm and silken as pink young peony flowers" (CP, p. 930). This was successfully changed to "Cool as syringa buds in morning hours,/Or firm and silken as young peony flowers" (CP, p. 65).

The imagistic focus of "A Baby Asleep after Pain", residing on the analogy of the bee and the baby, is more conspicuous in the original version (entitled "Trailing Clouds"). There is a circling perceptual approach in the poem, returning to the perfect outer (visual) and inner (psychological) analogy, an approach that recalls Lawrence's technique in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* of perceiving and understanding an object by repeatedly viewing it from slightly varying perspectives. The poet's apprehension of the baby's psychological situation, excellently grasped, is attained through observation and expressed in a perceptual simile whose substantiality and realism stand in striking contrast to the ethereal shimmer and thinness of some of the early poems. If the poem does not quite come up to the requirements of Imagism because of its descriptive, narrative and non-symbolic realism, it has, on the other hand, a Lawrencian force and truth of perception and empathy which by far surpasses Imagism. I quote the early version:

As a drenched, drowned bee
Hangs numb and heavy from the bending flower,
 So clings to me,
My baby, her brown hair brushed with wet tears
 And laid laughterless on her cheek,
Her soft white legs hanging heavily over my arm
 Swinging to my lullaby.

My sleeping baby hangs upon my life
 As a silent bee at the end of a shower
 Draws down the burdened flower.
 She who has always seemed so light
 Sways on my arm like sorrowful, storm-heavy boughs,
 Even her floating hair sinks like storm-bruised young
 leaves
 Reaching downwards:
 As the wings of a drenched, drowned bee
 Are a heaviness, and a weariness.

(CP, p. 930)

The rhythm is fairly smooth and the metre regular, the clustering of consecutive strong stresses denoting the perceptual elements upon which the analogy is based ("drenched, drowned bee": / / / , "brown hair brushed": / / / , "soft white legs": / / / , "storm-bruised young leaves": / / / /). The few rhymes fit in naturally, and as neither syntax nor metre had to be forced for their sake, there is none of that Lawrencian accumulation of unstressed syllables that accounts for much of the irregular, prose character of his verse. An exception is perhaps line five, profitably turned to an iambic pattern in the revision: "And laid against her cheek" (x / x / x /).

The relevance of perception for Lawrence's poetry becomes really and clearly apparent in his most personal poems. These are not necessarily his love lyrics, but the poems on his mother (in fact often hardly distinguishable, in their intensity, from the former), and particularly those on her death. These poems may be called confessional, for persona and poet, as well as material and experience, coincide so completely that they can hardly be kept apart except by functional definition.

At this point I should like to mention that I have, in the following, repeatedly used the expression *poet* where, strictly speaking, I should write *persona*. The reason for this is that the differentiation of the two is, on the whole, not relevant for this work and particularly in many highly personal poems only complicates matters without adding anything to analysis.

It is evident that in poems of great personal, emotional intensity the question of control is crucial. In fact, the death poems fall sharply into two groups: one group that displays a good deal of maudlin sentimentalism and uncontrolled effusions, another that contains items of classic lyrical perfection.

"The Virgin Mother", "Troth with the Dead", "The End", "The Inheritance" and "Call into Death" (and a number of juvenilia, including "Bereavement", "Loss" and "Grief") are all poems in some way suffering from the immediacy and impact of the experience their material is drawn from. Some of the very early poems remind me of Lawrence's statement about what he believed to be the underlying motive of all art: "One sheds one's sicknesses in books... one repeats and presents again one's emotions, to be master of them."¹⁷ Lawrence here indeed seems to be "presenting" his emotions in order to relieve his grief rather than to write poetry. The secondary role of poetry is apparent, as in "Bereavement" (*CP*, 872-73), by the absence of rhyme and partly even of any kind of traditional form, so that the poems, adopting only some rudimentary kind of semantic

line arrangement, verges on prose. Towards the end of the poem there is a progressive disintegration of poetical form tending towards mere self-expression. However, in spite of some grotesque images such as "my chest gapes open sometimes/At the wound's aching cicatrice" and the undeveloped central perception of the mother's "blue eyes", I am less distressed by the unfinished directness of "Bereavement" than by the sentimental effusions packed in pseudo-poetical form in "The Virgin Mother" or "The Inheritance". "The Virgin Mother", particularly the early version (*CP*, p. 944), unites almost all the defects of this kind of poetry; it is the writing of a poet who seems to be blinded by his own tears. Emotionalism obviously brings in a false note; we are given, in Laurence Lerner's words, "an account of the emotions of the speaker in terms of the qualities he projects on to the world".¹⁸ There is a fussiness verging on distortion in Lawrence's addresses to his dead mother. Moreover, diction is loaded with artificial poeticality, and the verse is so mechanical that it almost turns into involuntary satire. It is indeed very much as if the poet, unable to control his emotions, were escaping into or hiding behind poetical conventions. I quote a stanza from the early version as an illustration:

My little love, my darling
You were a doorway to me;
You let me out of the confine
Into a vast countrie,
Where people are crowded like thistles
Yet are shapely and lovable to see.

(ll. 1-6)

This is, of course, hopelessly banal. The intense pain which must have generated such poems (though not apparent at all in stanzas such as these) often finds its way out in a definitely macabre note, as in the third stanza of this poem, where we read: "You sweet love, my mother,/ Twice you have blooded me,/ Once with your blood at birth-time/ Once with your misery."

What strikes immediately in those poems which, in contrast to the ones mentioned above, succeed in spite of their material being likewise drawn so closely from personal experience, is their reliance on perception. Poems like "The Bride", "Listening" or "Silence" derive their controlling power from their intent concentration on and attention to mainly visual perception (though auditive occurs too); in "Sorrow" or "Brooding Grief", it is rather the concrete, perceptual external object which carries the expression of feeling and works as an objective correlative (as in "The Hands of the Betrothed" where the hands are used in mainly phenomenal terms to express the lovers' complex emotional situation). Most of these poems achieve an exceptional lyrical perfection, they come near to that "skilled verse" with its "perfect symmetry, the rhythm which returns upon itself like a dance" Lawrence talks of in his introduction to the next volume, a verse he believed would be dead in fifty years ("Poetry of the Present", *CP*, p. 182).

The formal control of "The Bride", which I consider one of the most successful of the early poems, may serve

as an example:

My love looks like a girl tonight,
 But she is old.
The plaits that lie along her pillow
 Are not gold,
But threaded with filigree silver,
 And uncanny cold.

She looks like a young maiden, since her brow
 Is smooth and fair;
Her cheeks are very smooth, her eyes are closed,
 She sleeps a rare,
Still winsome sleep, so still, and so composed.

Nay, but she sleeps like a bride, and dreams her dreams
 Of perfect things.
She lies at last, the darling, in the shape of her dream;
 And her dead mouth sings
By its shape, like thrushes in clear evenings.

(CP, p. 101)

Each two-line unit in the first stanza (which is the best of the three) contains its own antithesis, which is the realization through attentive observation of a truth which implies but at the same time goes beyond the merely perceptual. The verse is not only formally smooth, but also expressive of substance; the three second lines (2,4,6) with their painful brevity and the end rhymes marking their semantic unity act like blows of discovery and disenchantment. The pain and even the horror of death are there, much more efficiently expressed than in a poem like "The Virgin Mother"; but they are objectified by the concentration on perception and translated into visual poetry, which in the last stanza develops into something like vision. It is as if the stillness and composure of the subject apprehended were reflected in the verse; in fact the poem, one of the

few purely perceptual ones, conveys feeling through image and form, with a significant absence of any direct expression of emotion.¹⁹

In "Silence" and "Listening" we encounter for the first time the important element of silence, which is here the poet's awareness of the death in life his mother's passing has left him with. In his later poetry silence is again associated with death, but also with divinity, and becomes an essential positive force and creative element. Yet even here the generative power of the stillness of negation is apparent in lines such as these:

And off the forge of the world
Whirling in the draught of life
Go myriad sparks of people, filling
The night with strife.

Yet they never change the darkness
Nor blench it with noise;
Alone on the perfect silence
The stars are buoys.

("Listening", *CP*, p. 110, ll. 13-20)

Again formal control, with its correlation to perception by distribution of stresses and voiced or unvoiced sounds, is significant.

The "thin grey strand" of smoke from the poet's cigarette is the perceptual key term giving the poem "Sorrow" its unity and working as an objective correlative for his grief at the transience of life. The feeling, in F.R. Leavis's words, is *placed* (see below) by the external links of smoke and the mother's hair floating up and disappearing; the two are identified and symbolic of

evanescence. Notable is again the cluster of three strong stresses in the pivotal perceptual element, "thin grey strand/long grey hairs". Sandra Gilbert writes: "It is the *intensity* of attention to these precisely observed realistic details that gives the poem its power" (p. 64), details that are made to carry the emotional impact of the poem. Unlike "The Bride", "Sorrow" is unobtrusively and sparingly rhymed, there are no syntactic or metaphoric *tours de force* in this descriptive poem, an run-on lines for once assure the natural flow of the verse.

Why does the thin grey strand
Floating up from the forgotten
Cigarette between my fingers,
Why does it trouble me?

Ah, you will understand;
When I carried my mother downstairs,
A few times only, at the beginning
Of her soft-foot malady,

I should find, for a reprimand
To my gaiety, a few long grey hairs
On the breast of my coat; and one by one
I watched them float up the dark chimney.

(CP, pp. 106-7)

In "Brooding Grief" (which, like "Sorrow", is dramatized) the role of the central perceptual element – the leaf – is revealing: it is the external reference which prevents the poet from indulging more deeply in his grief and diverts him from it (as explicitly stated), establishing a connecting link between his inner life, his emotions and thoughts, and the outer world. The poem was first published in *Some Imagist Poets*; in fact, the concentration and

focusing on one single, concrete object or image which is – if not symbolic – yet outside the emotion presented, gives the poem its unity and conciseness, and in spite of the repeated rhymes the lines run comparatively smoothly and freely:

A yellow leaf, from the darkness
Hops like a frog before me;
Why should I start and stand still?
I was watching the woman that bore me
Stretched in the brindled darkness
Of the sick-room, rigid with will
To die: and the quick leaf tore me
Back to this rainy swill
Of leaves and lamps and the city street mingled
before me.

(CP, pp. 110-11)

There is a clear acceleration of speed in the last lines, particularly in the repetition pattern of line nine; the actuality of the "quick leaf" is conveyed in embryonic onomatopoeic dynamism, which is expressive of the urgency of life, pressing forward and tending to leave past things behind to be forgotten.

The famous "Piano" combines an even tighter rhyme pattern and metre with a naturally flowing, enjambed verse. I should like to include it in this group of poems, as it is thematically very closely related to them, expressing the poet's pain over his irrevocably lost childhood and the remembrance of his mother. The poem, considered by most critics to be one of the most successful – if not the most successful – of Lawrence's "Rhymed Poems", is certainly the best example of a revision that brings an immense im-

provement. The early draft consisted of five stanzas; in the final version, they were reduced to three, circumstantial material and irrelevant details were cut out. Through this condensation the poem achieves a much more poignant sense of unsentimental nostalgia. In addition, lines were shortened and the rhythm was smoothed. "Piano" gives evidence of the early success of the Lawrencian perceptual situation poem, of the dramatic handling of substance paired with description and observation leading to the expression of emotion.

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the
tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who
smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our
guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child
for the past.

(CP, p. 148)

In contrast to the situation in "Brooding Grief", perceptual actuality here leads the poet to his inner, emotional life; but its task of relativizing the feeling is the same. The emotional control of "Piano" has been noted by several critics. I quote F.R. Leavis:

Something is, we see, held and presented in this poem, and the presenting involves an *attitude towards*, an element of disinterested valuation. For all the swell of emotion the critical mind has its part in the whole; the constataion is at the same time in some measure a placing.²⁰

The feeling described in the poem is thus placed, as is apparent, on the level of substance, in expressions or words such as "in spite of myself", "betrays", "glamour", or "like a child", a simile showing the poet's awareness of his man-self. It is, in fact, the helpless sense of *dédoublement* of man and child that makes the last lines so moving: there is the child who weeps, and the man who tells us so. But the placing is also effected, technically, by the expression of the material in mainly perceptual terms: the constant reference to and presence of the visual and acoustic reality evokes the memory, a memory which is itself presented in perceptual terms ("vista", "I see"), leading to the emotional crisis.

I have noted in some of the poems discussed up to now ("The Bride", "Listening", "Brooding Grief", "After the Opera"), apart from a definite hardening of outline towards perceptual realism and corresponding inner truth, a tendency to adapt form in some way to the material presented, to achieve a kind of organic (often dynamic) form, though without, as yet, the abandonment of traditional verse forms, usually rhyme. "After the Opera" is an exception, being one of the few attempts in the early poems to do away with such forms and to achieve some kind of freer verse. The poem

"A Man at Play on the River" (CP, pp. 871-72), one of the unpublished juvenilia, is the first poem entirely in free verse.²¹ The poem, significantly, is probably the most consistently perceptual of all of Lawrence's early poems. It is also the first and most conspicuous example of Lawrence's dynamic form, one of his most important and characteristic achievements, to my mind, in his poetry (what Harry T. Moore calls Lawrence's "kinetic line", which is a "combination of urgency and vividness", or in other words motion and perception).²² Formal correspondence to the moving images described is achieved through syntactic symmetries such as anaphora, in part creating regular metrical patterns, or accumulated present participles. The verse acquires a forward pressure which reflects the kinetic pressure of the action. The lengthy subordinate clause and its enumerations in the first lines describe the scene; they precede and prepare the action, loading it with more kinetic energy by the suspense created by the preamble (this is a similar technique to that used in the late poem "The Man of Tyre").

Where the flickering river loiters
To keep the reflected variety of the houseboats;
The glow of red in a grey-green shadow of trees;
Like a fly that weaves through the shadows,
Like a bee that plays with the reflection of flowers
Darts a man at play;
Over the surface of shadow colour floats
His little punt, an autumn-brown beech-leaf,
Playing with the eddies
Hither and thither
Anywhere;
Playing with the soft-slipping water
Playing with the shadow colours, and the waving,
 reflected trees
With the rings that the fishes have made,
A swift, dexterous man, plying the slender pole,

His body pulsing with play
 His full, fine body bending and urging like the stress
 of a song,
 Darting his light punt with the quick-shifting fancy
 of verse,
 Among the shadows of blossoms and trees and rushes,
 In-weaving the bright thread of his joy
 Flashing his bright, brown arms as he leans on the
 pole,
 His blue shirt glimmering in the water among the
 shadow of trees,
 Threading the round joy of his white-flanneled hips
 full of play,
 Up the river, under the trees,
 Down the river, in the gleam of the sun,
 Across the river, bending low
 In one swift bound to the house-boat.

(11. 1-27)

The key terms of analogy all have the same choriambic pattern / x x / : "stress of a song/fancy of verse/rhythm of a poem/notes of a song". Thus lines 17 and 18 with their similes lift the verse to more than the formal imitation of perception-substance. Just as the man plays with the nature around him, in harmony with it, on the action level, so does the poet play, on the narrative or expression level, with the form of poetry, and there is a vital correspondence between the two, a parallel indispensable to the unity of the poem as a whole. The poem, admittedly, is thematically atypical, establishing no link to any human, personal reality, which is probably the reason for its isolated existence; its technique, however, and its statement on poetry by way of form, are almost prophetic of Lawrence's later perceptual poetry.

In "End of Another Home Holiday" (CP, pp. 62-64), which in contrast to "A Man at Play on the River" has the

emotional power of what Lawrence called his "real poems", there are also attempts, though still more rudimentary, at both formal liberation and organic form. The poem is rather lengthy and heterogeneous, particularly as to form: there are rhymed stanzas with irregular metre, unrhymed stanzas with conventional metrical patterns or with anaphoric constructions, and something like free-verse stanzas. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find criteria for the poetical unity of "End of Another Home Holiday"; nevertheless it is an extremely moving and in parts formally very successful poem. It starts off with sensory perception, with sight, smell and sound:

When shall I see the half-moon sink again
Behind the black sycamore at the end of the garden?
When will the scent of the dim white phlox
Creep up the wall to me, and in at my open window?

Why is it, the long, slow stroke of the midnight bell
(Will it never finish the twelve?)
Falls again and again on my heart with a heavy reproach?

(ll. 1-7)

Again there is the characteristic strong stress cluster / / / on the perceptual elements: "half-moon sink/dim white phlox/long, slow stroke". The last expression is implicitly onomatopoeic: the heavy, regular toll of the rhythm in the last three lines quoted (achieved by a predominantly dactylic metre as an extension of the strong-stress cluster) echoes perfectly the bells' stroke. But the form does not only reflect the substance; it is also expressive of the theme of the relentlessly and repeatedly

demanding affection of his mother and its "deadening" effect, and anticipates, formally and semantically, the last stanza.

The scenery of the home village is seen in terms of this affection:

The moon-mist is over the village, out of the mist
speaks the bell,
And all the little roofs of the village bow low,
pitiful, beseeching, resigned.
—Speak, you my home! what is it I don't do well?

Ah home, suddenly I love you
As I hear the sharp clean trot of a pony down the road,
Succeeding sharp little sounds dropping into silence
Clear up the long-drawn hoarseness of a train across
the valley.

(ll. 8-14)

The last stanza is one of the instances of Lawrencian onomatopoeic dynamism: each of the three last lines reflects acoustically, on the formal level, the perception they describe, and the speed or motion, the temporal succession of the sensory impressions is translated into the verse. Again the strong-stress clusters are conspicuous. An accumulation of alliterative sibilants, plosives and short syllables conveys the staccato of the trot and the quality of the sounds in the following line. The last line is again not only imitative of the train's "hoarseness", but also reiterates, by its broadening rhythm, the toll which marks the theme and, together with the suggestive power of the image of what will finally carry him away from parental love, leads to further considerations on his mother.

The following lines express the emotional conflict

"between man and child", as a critic puts it, between his wish for freedom and his sense of guilt towards his mother.²³ His sudden painful realization of her sufferings is conveyed in quick, short, rhymeless lines, like sobs, marking a heightened emotional intensity.

The light has gone out from under my mother's door.
That she should love me so!—
She, so lonely, greying now!
And I leaving her,
Bent on my pursuits!

(11. 15-19)

In the following lines, the village is again a metaphor for his mother's situation; nature and natural life, which are free and self-sufficient (a recurrent concept later), are contrasted with his own situation. Finally, in the last stanza, the heavy beat of the rhythm is reiterated, and the cumulation of identical rhymes, the stunning repetitions and the syntactic symmetries combine in a masterly way to express in perceptual terms the insistence and deadening effect on his life of his love and conflict. Again, form both imitates the subject and bodies forth theme, as the reality of the description is a metaphor for the poet's emotional situation. Both image and form thus have, in this poem, an immediate (descriptive/imitative) and a metaphoric (thematic/verifies theme) level.

The moon lies back and reddens.
In the valley a corncrake calls
Monotonously,
With a plaintive, unalterable voice, that deadens
My confident activity;

With a hoarse, insistent request that falls
Unweariedly, unweariedly,
Asking something more of me,
Yet more of me.

(ll. 55-63)

"End of Another Home Holiday" displays that "pervasive concern with landscape and the natural order in all their unceasing mutation" Keith Alldritt detected in Lawrence's early novels.²⁴ At the same time, it sets this outer world into relation to the poet's inner state ("Discord in Childhood" is another good example). This is done by the choice of particular items from landscape description which correspond best to the poet's emotional situation. But apart from being only a selective act the establishment of a correspondence or of metaphor for a state also appears to involve, especially in the last stanza, a kind of adaptation of landscape itself. This definitely sets a new note and points to the growing relevance of self-expression and message, which becomes evident in the next volume.

NOTES

¹All quotations of Lawrence's poetry will be taken from *The Complete Poems of D.H.Lawrence*, edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto and Warren Roberts, 2 vols (London, 1964), abbreviated *CP*, with subsequent page references cited parenthetically in the text.

²A. Alvarez, "D.H.Lawrence: The Single State of Man", in *The Shaping Spirit: Studies in Modern English and American Poets*, p. 141.

³W.H.Auden, *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays*, p. 285.

⁴Sandra Gilbert, *Acts of Attention*, pp. 26-27. All further page references will be given parenthetically in the text.

⁵See Harry T. Moore, *The Life and Works of D.H. Lawrence*, p. 53, and Vivian de Sola Pinto, "D.H.Lawrence: Letter-Writer and Craftsman in Verse", *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, 1 (1957), p. 23.

⁶E.T. [Jessie Chambers], *D.H.Lawrence: A Personal Record*, p. 105.

⁷Hebe R. Bair, "Free Verse Prosody: The Poetry of D.H.Lawrence", p. 96.

⁸Harry T.Moore, *The Life and Works of D.H.Lawrence*,
p. 45.

⁹For an extended analysis of Lawrence's impressionistic features and stylistic growth in the novels and the poetry see Jürgen Donnerstag, "Die Stilentwicklung im Werk von D.H.Lawrence" (Cologne, 1969).

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹¹See Robert B.Pearsall, "The Second Art of D.H. Lawrence", *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 63 (1964), 457-67.

¹²D.H.Lawrence, *Phoenix*, pp. 563-64.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 565.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 564.

¹⁵See Glenn Hughes, *Imagism and the Imagists*, p. 169 ff.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹⁷*The Collected Letters of D.H.Lawrence*, edited by Harry T.Moore, 2 vols (London, 1962), p. 234. Further quotations of Lawrence's letters will be from this edition, abbreviated CL, with page references given parenthetically in the text.

¹⁸Laurence Lerner, *The Truest Poetry*, p. 185.

¹⁹The excellent, carefully structured poem "Cherry Robbers" (which however does not belong to this group) similarly proceeds from a highly perceptual reality to a poignant, psychological truth; the main difference to "The Bride" lies in its pervasive symbolism, based on and developed from visual perception, and anticipating the turn to the inside.

For a careful discussion of "Cherry Robbers" see Hebe R.Bair, "Free Verse Prosody: The Poetry of D.H. Lawrence", pp. 84-92. She shows the relevant relationship of form to the constellation of images in the poem.

²⁰F.R.Leavis, "Judgment and Analysis: Notes in the Analysis of Poetry", in *Scrutiny: A Selection*, pp. 215-16.

²¹The relevance of this poem has been noted and the poem thoroughly analysed by Sandra Gilbert, *Acts of Attention*, pp. 76-82, and Hebe R.Bair, "Free Verse Prosody: The Poetry of D.H.Lawrence", pp. 151-57.

²²Harry T.Moore, *The Life and Works of D.H.Lawrence*, p. 45.

²³A.Alvarez, *The Shaping Spirit: Studies in Modern English and American Poets*, p. 147.

²⁴Keith Alldritt, *The Visual Imagination of D.H.*

Lawrence, p. 15.

CHAPTER II

LOOK! WE HAVE COME THROUGH!: THE OVERWHELMING INNER REALITY

Lawrence's claim concerning *Look! We Have Come Through!* elegantly evades the issue of the autonomy of a poem, for he states:

These poems should not be considered separately, as so many single pieces. They are intended as an essential story, or history, or confession, unfolding one from the other in organic development.

("Foreword" to *Look!*, CP, p. 191)

He thereby expresses his insistence on the priority of the message in this volume. At this point, *what* he had to say was in fact of extreme importance to him: the sequence describes fulfilment and rebirth to a new life through woman, whom he met in the person of Frieda in April 1912, and who was to become his companion for life in an intensive, turbulent and vital relationship. *Look!* contains confessional poems par excellence, narrating the "conflict of love and hate" between man and woman. Through this new and radical experience Lawrence's conception of life underwent a change, his ideas became more explicit, and we find the beginnings of the intrinsic Lawrencian vision, comprising the essential duality of life: otherness, blood-consciousness and the unknown, attained through love and sexuality, as opposed to the self, mental consciousness and the intellect.

The general heading "Unrhyming Poems" under which this volume figures is, like Lawrence's own statements in his introduction to the sequence about what he was trying to do, rather misleading. More than half of the poems are rhymed. In "Poetry of the Present" (which, it is important to note, was written two years and a half after the completion of the volume, and in fact rather relates to the formal aspects of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*) Lawrence expresses the intention of writing a poetry of the "incarnate moment", the "immediate present", a poetry that is dynamic, direct and ephemeral and has "no rhythm which returns upon itself", a poetry of free verse, in fact, whose form has no laws except for its correspondence to the feeling. This intention, however, remains to a great extent unrealized (cf. *CP*, pp. 181-86). His theory on free verse, which should be "direct utterance from the instant, whole man", is hardly put into practice, even where he does not use conventional verse forms; what often happens is that he writes poetry which, in spite of rhymes, follows the intonation and rhythm of natural speech so that, were it not for the rhymes and the division - curiously irrelevant - into verse lines, nothing would distinguish it from prose. "Roses on the Breakfast Table" is an illustrative example. It is not often, either, that Lawrence is able to "use rhyme accidentally, not as a sort of draper's rule for measuring lines off" (*CL*, p. 413). Throughout the volume, rhymes are usually too self-consciously applied to satisfy the claim that formal structure "must come new each time

from within" and reflect the "hidden emotional pattern" (CL, p. 244). On the other hand, many of the poems which are indeed unrhymed tend to be formally lawless, with neither metrical nor syntactical patterns to establish a relevant relation to substance. This poetry is a victim of its own directness of expression and freedom of form, and ends by being merely chaotic. The postulated organic form which is the basis of free verse and, according to Herbert Read, occurs "when a work of art has its own inherent laws, originating with its very invention and fusing in one vital unity both structure and content", is only really achieved in the following volume.¹

In this volume there is, on the whole, not much to "look at", as the title might suggest. The relevance of perception in *Look!*, which contains predominantly poems expressing personal emotion, must obviously reside in its function as a controlling factor. In some poems the perceived external or actual object works as an objective correlative, linking and integrating the outer and the inner world, and acting as a cohesive agent in the poem. A number of *Look!* poems start off with descriptions of landscape and surroundings, though not all of these stand in relevant relation to their theme. In some cases, e.g. "Forsaken and Forlorn" or "She Looks Back", the description is merely a convention and adds nothing to the poem; landscape here has the role Lawrence feels it has in painting: "Landscape seems to be *meant* as a background to an intenser vision of life...."² In other poems, however, there is a

vital connection with the thematic evolvement, as outer reality is brought into meaningful correspondence with inner reality and symbol, expressive of the emotional state and psychological situation of the poet. Description, in fact, gradually turns from the "vivid scenes" and realistic natural settings of the early poems to an inner, often surrealistic landscape.³ This is a tendency towards expressionism developing from the first volume to *Look!*, but the process may also occur in a single poem.⁴ Perception becomes introspection, which is itself often an development of this perception, i.e., the objects observed may be the same, but they change their aspect and acquire a new meaning in the light of experience and emotion. The external landscape is transformed and, as it were, appropriated, and drawn up to a symbolic level; it is however not, as later in *Pansies*, internalized, it still "exists" in a kind of surrealistic personal world. The lovers' own reality determines everything and gives its own shape to the surrounding world, which is no longer a source of inspiration for the poet, but an object for the projection of his feelings. In "First Morning" (*CP*, p. 204) the poet, after presenting the reader with the typically detailed impressionistic landscape description, clearly sets landscape and the surrounding nature in second place:

Now in the morning
As we sit in the sunshine on the seat by the
 little shrine,
And look at the mountain-walls,

Walls of blue shadow,
 And see so near at our feet in the meadow
 Myriads of dandelion pappus
 Bubbles ravelled in the dark green grass
 Held still beneath the sunshine—
 It is enough, you are near—
 The mountains are balanced,
 The dandelion seeds stay half-submerged in the
 grass;
 You and I together
 We hold them proud and blithe
 On our love.
 They stand upright on our love,
 Everything starts from us,
 We are the source.

(11. 11-27)

A poem may also, as in "Bei Hennef", proceed immediately from the perception and description of landscape to the expression of an emotional situation, establishing a correspondence between the two that is basic to the theme, or, as in "Frohnleichnam" (which is correctly spelt *Fronleichnam*), start with direct self-expression and then move on to description and finally to the pivotal metaphor. It is when an inner reality is directly presented, without any perceptual link, that the poems often become abstract, containing isolated symbols, i.e. symbols with no roots in any non-metaphorical, perceptual reality and only definable by being related to other symbols in the poem. Such poems hang, as it were, in the air, and their lack of material substance usually also entails artificiality of diction and form. Likewise, some metaphors employing natural objects have nothing to do with the perception of these objects, but serve an argument or idea instead; the meaning is forced upon the objects and is not integral to them, and the same happens to the form in its relation to the theme. We see this in poems

like "Fireflies in the Corn", where the prettification of nature is a clear sign of lack of control, or "Rose of All the World" with its excessively argumentative character.

Finally there are poems whose thematic structure is almost purely composed of perceptual elements, like "Gloire de Dijon" or "A Doe at Evening"; their success is assured by their concentration on visual perception and the development based on it.

On the whole, however, I must admit that I have found only very few poems worth closer consideration in this volume. This is due to the poet's withdrawal, as it were, from the tangible, natural world in this phase, surprising, perhaps, in the love poems of an artist who lays so much importance on the physical aspect of love. The dominating presence of nature which can be seen in many early poems (and better still in Lawrence's early novels) has disappeared, and psychological and inner preoccupations have taken over. The expression of these, however, entails considerable difficulties, and it is only in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* that Lawrence will achieve a new quality of perception and develop a perceptual symbolism, and through it, a new language and style. *Look! We Have Come Through!* is, as in fact the title might suggest, a transitory volume.

When the perceptual, external objective correlative for the emotion is missing, the result is often emotionality, as I have shown in the poems on his mother's death. The direct expression of feeling entails the danger for

Lawrence of slipping into sentimentality or anger, or of intellectualizing the emotion, and there is a good deal of this in *Look!*. There is some truth in Anthony Beal's statement that Lawrence's emotional poems often fail, as "human relations and feelings cannot be immediately apprehended in all their richness and complexity" as nature can be.⁵ Although I believe that Lawrence can apprehend feelings most acutely, he is in fact often unable, where personal emotions are concerned, to remain true to his subject as is the case when he is involved in direct perception.

"Wedlock" or parts of "Mutilation" are examples of the sentimental poem, expressing feeling for its own sake. If, in his angry poems, the poet is not being true to others, lashing out usually at his wife, he is, here, not being true to himself. Only a short glance into "Wedlock" (CP, pp. 245-48) reveals the falsity of the statements and the fussiness, even without reference to Lawrence's basic belief, formulated in other poems, that "it is in pure, unutterable resolvedness, distinction of being, that one is free,/not in mixing, merging, not in similarity" ("Manifesto", CP, p. 267). Lawrence himself gives the best explanation of what he was doing in poems like "Wedlock": "I was a lover, I kissed the woman I loved,/And God of horror, I was kissing also myself" ("New Heaven an Earth", CP, p. 257). These poems, in other words, suffer from the fallacy of immediate expression; the feeling must be placed,

and this the poet can only do by the relevant inclusion of perceptual elements.

There are one or two poems in *Look!*, however, which succeed in their stark emotional directness. "Humiliation" is one of these (and, to a lesser extent, "Mutilation"). Destructively judged by several critics, "Humiliation" (*CP*, pp. 214-15), though admittedly simple, is yet a controlled lyric, moving and unsentimental.⁶ It is devoid of imagery or symbol, completely unsophisticated and the wording must be taken at its face value; there is no other level, no vision achieved, no greater context established. The poem is a *cri du cœur*, the emotional intensity determining its thematical focus, and its style verges on prose, relying for its effect mainly on its rhetorical-syntactical structure. Many statements and questions are "figures of grammar", defined by G.M. Hopkins as something which "can be shifted to other words with a change of specific meaning but keeping some general agreement as of noun over against noun, verb against verb, assertion against assertion, etc...".⁷ As the crucial exclamation "do not leave me" is repeated, its impact is widened by the poet's growing awareness of the necessity of its fulfilment. "Mutilation" (*CP*, pp. 212-13) is less homogeneous, and at times dangerously colloquial, though, I suppose, one could say that if there is stammering, it is the effect of the truth of directness, or, in Lawrence's words, if there is confusion and discord, they "only belong to the reality as noise belongs to the plunge of water" ("Poetry of the Present", *CP*, p. 184). The final invocation,

with its recurring stress pattern / x x / (x) and the foreign-names magic conjuring of the ancient Gælic gods, is beautiful:

Night folk, Tuatha De Danaan, dark Gods, govern her
sleep,
Magnificent ghosts of the darkness, carry off her
decision in sleep,
Leave her no choice, make her lapse me-ward, make her,
Oh Gods of the living Darkness, powers of Night.

(ll. 37-40)

Admittedly, the comparative success of these poems does not agree with the argument of my thesis; yet it is obvious that there may be exceptions to what I certainly do not consider a rule, but a relevant approach to Lawrence's poetry. However, it is clear that such poems differ a great deal from that type of poem which I consider to be representative of Lawrence's essential poetical achievement.

Poems like "Humiliation" are closer to human reality than effusions like "Wedlock" (containing more humiliation than any of these), and they are certainly much closer to the "poetry of the incandescent moment" than the bulk of the *Look!* poems in which emotion turns to anger and is intellectualized, leading to dogmatism and abstractions. Such poems are often extremely repetitive, with a relentless and exasperated, hammering sort of repetition, involving no new insight or change. "Lady Wife", "Frost Flowers" and "She Looks Back", all attacks on the assertive and intellectual woman, are full of dead repetitions and condemnation sprung from unmastered emotion. The dogmatic outpourings of these poems are so intellectualized that,

instead of the throb of the insurgent moment, we get the formally rigid, second-hand, subsequent reflections of the intellect.

A poem like "In the Dark" works in the same way: though it is seemingly a dialogue, there is nothing realistic about it as in the early poems; rather, it is a rhetorical device for argument, with colloquial language forced into a conventional rhyme scheme. There is, here, much of what Edward Thomas in 1913 called the "gropings of self-conscious men and women set on edge by love or fatigue or solitude".⁸

"Elysium" or "Paradise-Re-Entered", glorying in the lovers' rebirth through sensuality and sexuality, remain, in spite of some metaphors operating with perceptual elements, on a highly symbolic level. The vision then, paradoxically, appears almost spiritual and sterile, and, intensely personal as the material may be, hollow. The verse, significantly, is painfully mechanical; it is rigid but at the same time clumsy, with unnatural inversions and awkward run-on lines. We realize, considering Lawrence's contention that formal structures must be re-created every time according to the urge of the emotion, how very difficult the integration of form in such an abstract vision of sensual experience can be.

Lawrence's conflict with self-assertion and his awareness that the true surrender to emotion, without slipping into argument and dogmatism, is essentially problematic, is amply documented in his work (and biography, for that). In *Women in Love* we find the following dialogue between

Birkin and Ursula:

"I want you to drop your assertive *will*, your frightened apprehensive insistence, that is what I want. I want you to trust yourself so implicitly that you can let yourself go."

"Let myself go!" she re-echoed in mockery. "I can let myself go easily enough. It is you who can't let yourself go, it is you who hangs on to yourself as if it were your only treasure. *You - you* are the Sunday School teacher - *You - you* preacher."

The amount of truth that was in this made him stiff and unheeding of her.

(*Women in Love*, p. 243)

This strain of self-consciousness and "mentality" which prevents Birkin from apprehending the other as he is, without distortion, is, as the poet tells us in "Sinners" or "Spring Morning", completely absent from nature. The insouciance and absence of questioning and rationalizing in natural life is the necessary condition for wonder, the wonder Lawrence himself wants to get at in his poetry, as he writes in his famous and widely discussed "Song of a Man Who Has Come Through" (*CP*, p. 250). This poem both formulates and embodies his poetical credo. Here the self is clearly set against the perhaps metaphoric yet none the less creative perceptual element, the wind, which he wants to attend to: "Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!". The poet expresses the wish to obliterate his ego and be a medium, a well-head, "sensitive, subtle, oh, delicate, a winged gift", through which poetical truth is conveyed. This transparency and wind-like quality, verified in the smooth, light flow of the verse, will finally bring him to the wonder, which is embedded deep down in the rock of

darkness and otherness.⁹

In "Whistling of Birds" Lawrence attributes the ability to sing this kind of song, in much the same words, to the birds:

Where does it come from, the song? After so long a cruelty, how can they make it up so quickly? But it bubbles through them, they are like little well-heads, like fountain-heads whence the spring trickles and bubbles forth. It is not of their own doing. In their throats the life distils itself into sound. It is the rising of silvery sap of a new summer, gurgling itself forth.¹⁰

Now the unencumbered naturalness of nature is, as it were, transferred to the poet when he attends to it, and enables him to preserve its true being. Nature is not, like Homo sapiens, prone to the tendency of imposition and subjective possession, and for this reason demands reverence and respect. In "She Said as Well to Me" (CP, pp. 254-56) the poet pleads for his own dignity and inviolability, which any human being accords freely to wild creatures, but not to his fellows. Indeed we see how, in the description of natural life perceived, the poetry as well as the verse achieves beauty in realizing what it set out to propagate, the unassertive delicate apprehension of the other:

You would think twice before you touched a weasel on a
fence
as it lifts its straight white throat.
Your hand would not be so flig and easy.
Nor the adder we saw asleep with her head on her shoulder,
curled up in the sunshine like a princess;
when she lifted her head in delicate, startled wonder
you did not stretch forward to caress her
though she looked rarely beautiful
and a miracle as she glided delicately away, with such
dignity.

And the young bull in the field, with his wrinkled, sad
face,
you are afraid if he rises to his feet,
though he is all wistful and pathetic, like a monolith,
arrested, static.

(11. 43-54)

The claim of preserving the other's or one's own inviolability or truth, crucial in the presentation of personal emotion and experience, is thus fulfilled when perception of nature or of another being is present, be it only as a relevant approach to further considerations, or as an objective correlative for the poet's feeling and thoughts; the effort of remaining true to perception generates, as it were, a corresponding attention to truth of feeling and to expression. Delicate, selfless and unbiased apprehension of all things which are not himself, Lawrence realizes at the end of *Look!*, is the only means of escaping the vicious circle in which "skies, trees, flowers, birds, water,/people, houses, streets, vehicles, machines,/nations, armies, war, peace-talking,/work, recreation, governing, anarchy,/it was all tainted with myself, I knew it all to start with/because it was all myself" ("New Heaven and Earth", *CP*, pp. 256-61). This points almost inevitably to the observational perceptual nature poetry of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*.

"Bei Hennef" (*CP*, p. 203), the first poem in *Look!* concerned with the poet's new life and love, starts off with an idyllic impressionistic tableau:

The little river twittering in the twilight,
The wan, wondering look of the pale sky,
This is almost bliss.

And everything shut up and gone to sleep,
All the troubles and anxieties and pain
Gone under the twilight.

Only the twilight now, and the soft "Sh!" of the river
That will last for ever.

The peaceful harmony of the setting is reflected in the alliterations in lines one and two, and the only unobtrusive half-rhyme is significantly on "ever"; the perceptual elements contributing to this peacefulness are the "pale sky" and the "soft 'Sh!'", visual and auditive, marking the only two consecutive strong stresses in the verse; the "troubles and anxieties" are immediately set aside, formally and semantically, by the metrically almost identical "gone under the twilight" (/ x x x / x (x)). The following stanza signals the shift towards the inner side of things, establishing the correspondence between the phenomenal level and the psychological:

And at last I know my love for you is here;
I can see it all, it is whole like the twilight,
It is large, so large, I could not see it before,
Because of the little lights and flickers and inter-
ruptions,
Troubles, anxieties and pains.

The supporting thematic link is the psycho-perceptual comparison of the poet's love with the twilight, the key term, which contains dark and light, as love contains suffering and joy, and the perceptuality of the twilight is transferred to the love: "I can see it all". The "lights

and flickers and interruptions" still belong to both worlds (to landscape and feeling), and the "troubles, anxieties and pains", which before were those of the "landscape people", are now the lovers'. Finally, their situation is directly expressed, the verse leaving the descriptive level and concentrating on the ultimate inner reality:

You are the call and I am the answer,
You are the wish, and I the fulfilment,
You are the night, and I the day.
What else? it is perfect enough.
It is perfectly complete,
You and I,
What more—?

Strange, how we suffer in spite of this!

The change of style is obvious: the shift from an adjectival to a predominantly substantival diction, the propensity for abstract terms and a gradual developing of the symbol are expressionistic features. The echoic metrical symmetry of the pattern / x x / | x / x (x) / (x) (even "it is perfect enough" and "you and I" are variations and condensations of this basic metre) is almost self-evident and works to express, in each single line and throughout the whole stanza, the equilibrated togetherness and corresponding harmony of the lovers on the formal level. At the same time, though, I detect a subtle anticipation and implication of the predicative impact of the last line in the image of night and day, which, while implying the unity of complements, is also expressive of duality, of light and dark, and of the dichotomy of twilight (which is, after all, half day, half night) and of love. The asymmetrical, colloquial last line, ending on two unstressed syllables

(which is nowhere the case in the rest of the poem) brings the thematic import of the whole poem to its climax by directly expressing the antagonism inherent in love in substance and form.

By relating his own emotions and experiences to the outer world and thus placing them, the poet is able to attend to them truly and to discover the "hidden emotional pattern" of the contending and correlating forces in love (the "bliss" of the first stanza stands in sharp contrast to the suffering of the last line; the semantically relevant rhyme "bliss/this" - whether intended or not - has been noted by Gilbert, p. 90). The poet is saying something about his feelings by structuring them, and the resulting pattern is integrated in substance and form; I suppose it is this Lawrence meant when he wrote to Edward Marsh in 1913: "I can't tell you what pattern I see in my poetry save one complete thing" (CL, p. 244). This patterning of experience and emotion in the poem is a kind of distillation from reality, a condensation achieving a definite poetical, thematic focus, or in Robin Skelton's words:

...we can see that the poem, in patterning an experience, patterns only the essential core of that experience, and that the poem as experience has a coherence, definition, and unity, which is almost never found in our experience of any other part of life. It does, in fact, abstract from the experience a gestalt.¹¹

This is of course true of any good poem, but it is particularly conspicuous in a poem like "Bei Hennef", where not only the pattern itself but also its formation emerge most clearly.

In poems like "River Roses" and "On the Balcony" the transformations the natural settings are subject to are obvious. The landscape described in "River Roses" (*CP*, pp. 216-17), at first seemingly realistic scenery, soon turns out to be an expression and reflection of the poet's subjective state. Descriptions and images are no longer frame or background, but integral thematic constituents of the poem itself. The first stanza is unaltered and remains on the realistic-descriptive level, whereas the second, clearly moving towards a visionary landscape, has undergone a few revealing changes in the later version: the "warm wild roses" become "dark wild roses", and, with the same shift towards symbolism, the conventional imagery of kisses and roses in the last three lines is replaced by the snake, standing for otherness and the unconscious forces. The syntactical parallelisms (the first line being identical) of the two stanzas, the reiteration of the "-ing" rhyme and metrical echoes in the second stanza bring about, on the formal level, the correspondence of outer and inner reality. Here we obviously find the beginnings of the poet's attempt to bring his outstanding descriptive talents through to the achievement of an equally acute and penetrating expressionist vision.

In "On the Balcony" (*CP*, pp. 208-9) the view given in the first stanza, actually "seen" as it may well be, already establishes a definite point of reference by the expression "between us and it", anticipating the placing subjectivity. As the poem proceeds, the poet's attention

is drawn to the woman next to him, and as his senses take her in, the landscape changes and darkens (darkness always being an indicator of visionary quality in Lawrence's poetry) and turns surrealistic. "Adown the pale green glacier river floats/A dark boat through the gloom" reflects the poet's emotional situation, expressed in the crucial question "what have we but each other?", and the immediately following direct reference to the lovers' situation confirms the inner quality of the scenery. Obviously, landscape loses its background role and becomes central as it moves from the realistic-descriptive to a metaphoric-symbolic level.

In "Frohnleichnam" the experience and emotional situation is given first, followed by a description of the lovers' view from the balcony which is highly suggestive of their state; finally they are related, in a simile of nature correspondence, to the surrounding world they perceive. The perceptual elements in the poem are pivotal to its thematic structure. I quote the whole poem:

You have come your way, I have come my way;
You have stepped across your people, carelessly,
hurting them all;
I have stepped across my people, and hurt them in
spite of my care.

But steadily, surely, and notwithstanding
We have come our ways and met at last
Here in this upper room.

Here the balcony
Overhangs the street where the bullock-wagons slowly
Go by with their loads of green and silver birch-trees
For the feast of Corpus Christi.

Here from the balcony
We look over the growing wheat, where the jade-green
river
Goes between the pine-woods,
Over and beyond to where the many mountains
Stand in their blueness, flashing with snow and the
morning.

I have done; a quiver of exultation goes through me,
like the first
Breeze of the morning through a narrow white birch.
You glow at last like the mountain tops when they catch
Day and make magic in heaven.

(CP, p. 209)

The - syntactic - symmetry of the first stanza is retained throughout the free verse poem: it is the symmetry of you/I. The identical result expressed in "carelessly, hurting them all" and "hurt them in spite of my care" is verified in the congruity of the stress pattern / x x / x x /, which finds a kind of refrain in "here in this upper room" where the lovers are united, reminiscent of the hurt they were both involved in before they came together. The syntactically near-parallel stanzas three and four contain the description, and each corresponds, respectively, to the "I" and the "you": the third is expressive of the poet's state, and the fourth of the woman's. This is made clear in the last stanza, where the new "I" is related to the birch-tree, and the "you" to the mountains. His view is more sombre, a slow progression, loaded with the suggestion of pain and death in the lovers' feast, and the Corpus Christi reference is essentially his. Hers is the view of thriving life, of rebirth and a firm new beginning and morning. There is an echo of the pattern found in the first stanza, now reduced to / x x / x, in the perceptual key terms

towards the end of the poem:

stand in their blueness
snow and the morning
breeze of the morning
magic in heaven

alluding to the inherent suffering in love's situation, as in "Bei Hennef". These perceptual terms and the simile thus unite the poem, in form and content, in a relevant, unparaphrasable whole. The last expression "magic in heaven" is multi-layered, combining perceptual and emotional elements, upon the correspondence of which the structure of the poem is based; though describing, on the level of actuality, a visual phenomenon, it also leads to a metaphoric and symbolic level, standing for the ecstatic realm of the lovers in their significantly specified "upper room", which offers, as it were, a panoramic view of the landscape of their life.

Among the few successful confessional poems there are one or two which succeed through their perceptual simplicity. I am thinking of "December Night" or "History". Both poems are short and concise, with a tight formal pattern. "December Night" is the first of a sequence of Night Poems, an unpretentious but charming lyric, retaining the level of actuality:

Take off your cloak and your hat
And your shoes, and draw up at my hearth
Where never woman sat.

I have made the fire up bright;
Let us leave the rest in the dark
And sit by firelight.

The wine is warm in the hearth;
The flickers come and go.
I will warm your limbs with kisses
Until they glow.

(CP, p. 237)

Metrically, the poem is extremely regular, particularly in the last stanza, and end rhymes are consistent; the stresses as well as the rhymes are semantically relevant: the two strong rhymes -- which are not, as in the first stanza, by-passed by an enjambement -- denote perceptual elements: "bright/firelight", "go (of flickers)/glow". With the last rhyme on "glow" (note the parallel to "Frohnleichnam") the thematic correspondence and harmony of the perceptual world and that of the couple's love and sexuality is achieved on the formal level. As the sequence proceeds, however, fire and darkness change their quality and become symbols in a vision of rebirth, and perceptuality, unfortunately, is lost; diction is divested of its concreteness, and whatever the sequence may gain in symbolic complexity, it loses much of its simple appeal.

"History" (CP, p. 248), though intensely personal, displays a relatively detached emotional attitude, as the title itself, with its hint at retrospection, indicates. The poem is carefully controlled and represents one of those few successes in traditional form. The theme is again duality in love, which includes hate, and is developed by the establishment of a correspondence with suggestive and metaphoric perceptual elements:

The listless beauty of the hour
When snow fell on the apple-trees
And the wood-ash gathered in the fire
And we faced our first miseries.

(ll. 1-4)

evocative of the antagonism of life and death, light and dark, passion and consummation, anticipating the basic dichotomy directly expressed in the last stanza.

"A Doe at Evening", concerned with very private experience, which is yet not directly expressed, draws its force not from the description of and correspondence to scenery, but from a concentrated observation of a single object of natural life, which is related to the poet's situation.¹² It is an immediate precursor of the poems of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, and is similarly constructed, starting with the expression of direct, realistic visual perception, then proceeding to the interpretation of this perception, empathy, and finally attaining the metaphoric level and vision. I quote the whole poem:

As I went through the marshes
a doe sprang out of the corn
and flashed up the hill-side
leaving her fawn.

On the sky-line
she moved round to watch,
she pricked a fine black blotch
on the sky.

I looked at her
and felt her watching;
I became a strange being.
Still, I had my right to be there with her.

Her nimble shadow trotting
along the sky-line, she
put back her fine, level-balanced head.
And I knew her.

Ah yes, being male, is not my head hard-
balanced, antlered?
Are not my haunches light?
Has she not fled on the same wind with me?
Does not my fear cover her fear?

(CP, p. 222)

There is a gradual modification of the verse, corresponding to a change in the poet, towards a freer form. The regularity of the rhythm and the full rhymes of the first two stanzas with their clear kinetic line, the flow and speed of the verse in the first stanza corresponding to the movement, and the halting quality in the second to the stasis, , give way to unobtrusive identical rhymes in the third stanza. The poet becomes, through the reciprocal visual contact, a "strange being", and thus acquires that quality of otherness himself which he discovers in the other, and which, according to Lawrence, is a common element in all creation we can relate to when we are free of self-assertion and self-consciousness. This freedom, then, is reflected in the rhymeless, naturally flowing yet controlled form of the last two stanzas. Punctuation and pauses have an increasingly semantic function; in stanza four, recognition, which is crucial and can only occur as the poet's "ordinary consciousness" is obliterated, is set off from the rest by isolation with full stops *and* line arrangement. The syntactical parallels and metrical symmetries of the last stanza, finally, are integral to the vision of correspondence between animal and poet, object and subject, and the

identical stress pattern of discovery ("and I knew her": x x / x) and identification ("does not my fear cover her fear": x x / x x x / x) at the end, points to unity through visual and intuitional perception, which is at the same time achieved on the plane of poetical expression.

"Gloire de Dijon", "Giorno dei Morti" and, to a lesser extent, "Sunday Afternoon in Italy" are poems relying predominantly on observation and description for their statement. Of these, only "Gloire de Dijon" is written in the first person; the beauty of this poem lies in the perception itself and its expression, and in the relation of subject to object perceived, which determines the quality of this masterly, perceptually dynamic word-painting. Del Ivan Janik speaks of the "carefully manipulated distortions that helped to capture the palpable reality of his subjects" which Lawrence attributed to Cézanne, and detects the same technique in "Gloire de Dijon", which is "more than a portrait of a woman bathing; it is an attempt to convey the *woman's* sensations as well as the onlooker's impressions, and to evoke those sensations on a tactile and kinesthetic level."¹³ The poem is indeed one of the best of *Look!* and its visual metaphors of correspondence between the roses and the woman's body convey the physicality and something of that intuitive *appleyness* which we will encounter in the next volume. As it has, however, already been extensively and carefully discussed, it needs no further comment from me.¹⁴

"Sunday Afternoon in Italy" is an excellent instance

of psychological penetration of a young Italian couple by observation, a study in the behaviour of human beings, rather rare in Lawrence's poetry; usually he (ab-)uses people in his poems either to prove a point, for argument, or as an expression of a divine glimpse rather than for the purpose of representing actual men and women. The poem is however in danger, as it leaves the observational level, of developing into one of the Lawrencian abstract visions, and the occasionally awkwardly rhyme-trapped quality of the verse betrays this. Thematically, it has much in common with some short stories, and might, in fact, have been turned into one with profit.

"Giorno dei Morti" has an imagistic perspective, a concentration of observation and theme. The poem describes the Service of All Souls; the persona does not appear, but the next poem "All Souls" (*CP*, p. 233), with its obvious reference to the poet's dead mother: "I am a naked candle burning on your grave", indicates the source of the attentive force of the poem.

Along the avenue of cypresses,
All in their scarlet cloaks and surplices
Of linen, go the chanting choristers,
The priests in gold and black, the villagers....

And all along the path to the cemetery
The round dark heads of men crowd silently,
And black-scarved faces of womenfolk, wistfully
Watch at the banner of death, and the mystery.

And at the foot of a grave a father stands
With sunken head, and forgotten, folded hands;
And at the foot of a grave a mother kneels
With pale shut face, nor either hears nor feels

The coming of the chanting choristers
Between the avenue of cypresses,

The silence of the many villagers,
The candle-flames beside the surplices.

(CP, p. 232)

The poem has an extremely regular rhythm and consistent rhyme scheme. The metre follows a basic iambic pattern (including some extended variations), perfectly reflecting the pace of the procession as well as of the *marche funèbre*. Whereas in stanza three the lines conclude with iambs, and the rhyme scheme is aabb, the reversal of the iambs to dactyls at the end of all lines of the other stanzas, describing the procession, is evocative of a litany. Lines one and three of the third stanza are metrically identical (and so are lines two and four, with the exception of one foot), the first couplet describing the father, the second the mother at the grave in a parallel grammatical construction; stanza four has the same structure, expressive of the substance, the respective first lines of the couplets describing the men, divided in sound ("hears") and silence ("nor feels"), and the second lines the place. Even more relevant, though, than the symmetries and parallelisms, are the metrical irregularities. Two and eight are the only lines starting with a strong stress, on the words "all" and "watch", and in lines six and seven I find the only three consecutive strong stresses in the poem, on the perceptual expressions "round dark heads" (of men) and "black-scarved faces" (of women), anticipating the parallelisms of stanza three; the irregularities thus extract the thematic essence of the poem by formal means: they all, men and women, watch "at the banner

of death, and the mystery", and this is not only what the poem is about, but also what the poet himself is doing, and this act obviously includes a cyclic process, where the end is reflected in the beginning, as death is in life, and this is manifest in the poem's structure.

Of the poems in *Look!* the most relevant for the following volume *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* are obviously "Gloire de Dijon" and "A Doe at Evening", where attentive observation leads to interpretation and correlation, and finally to symbol and vision.

NOTES

¹Herbert Read, *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism*, p. 19.

²D.H.Lawrence, "Introduction to these Paintings", *Phoenix*, p. 561.

³See *CL*, p. 263: "I have no longer the joy in creating vivid scenes, that I had in *Sons and Lovers*" Lawrence writes to Garnett in 1914.

⁴See Max Wildi, "The Birth of Expressionism in the Work of D.H.Lawrence", *English Studies*, 19 (1937), 241-59, and note 9 to Chapter I.

⁵Anthony Beal, *D.H.Lawrence*, p. 105.

⁶For severe criticism of this poem see Graham Hough, *The Dark Sun*, p. 232, and R.G.N.Salgado, "The Poetry of D.H.Lawrence", p. 88.

⁷G.M.Hopkins, *Notebooks*, pp. 221-22, quoted from Herbert Read, *The True Voice of Feeling*, p. 95.

⁸Edward Thomas, in "Bookman", *The Critical Heritage*, p. 51.

⁹Sandra Gilbert notes the significant substitution of *wonder* in proof for *word*: "For him, wonder inheres in knowledge of the unknown while the word simply involves the formulation of that knowledge...The word exists to express the wonder, rather than the wonder to generate the word." (*Acts of Attention*, p. 106).

¹⁰D.H.Lawrence, *Phoenix*, p. 4.

¹¹Robin Skelton, *The Poetic Pattern*, p. 75.

¹²The imagistic perspective of this poem has been noted by several critics, a.o. by Vivian de Sola Pinto, *CP*, p. 11.

¹³Del I.Janik, "Toward 'Thingness': Cézanne's Paintings and Lawrence's Poetry", *Twentieth Century Literature*, 19 (1973), p. 123.

¹⁴See *ibid.*, and Hebe R.Bair, "Free Verse Prosody: The Poetry of D.H.Lawrence", who comments on p. 170: "In short, the total structure of this poem makes possible its multiple thematic focus: it is about what the persona sees, as well as what he hears; it describes actions, movements, and images in process of being seen and heard, yet transfigures process into the permanence of art. The meter foregrounds the images and motions which the persona sees, the phonetic structure embodies what he hears. The meter accomplishes the movements,

the moments of stasis, and the transitions between them;
the sound patterns glide lightly in movement, then add the
weight of long vowels to the slow and solemn trochaic lines."

CHAPTER III

BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS: FROM ACTUALITY TO APPLEYNESS

In *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, the most popular of Lawrence's volumes and the one which has attracted the widest attention, we find the most frequent and conspicuous occurrence of observation and description, and of generation of feeling and thought from perception. Quite a number of successful poems of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* have, for some decades already, been standing anthology pieces, though the volume as a whole is by no means as convincing as has generally been claimed, containing quite a deal of undistinguished poetry too.

The poems were written almost entirely between 1920 and 1923, in Italy, New Mexico and Australia. Keith Alldritt very truly remarks on the great importance Italy had for Lawrence's visual art, and indeed many of the best perceptual poems in this volume take their subjects from Italian flora and fauna (we remember that some of the few good poems in *Look!* were also written in Italy).¹ In *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* Lawrence turns away from the autobiographical concerns of *Look!* to the celebration of otherness in natural life. Though war experiences have embittered him against humanity, he as yet avoids a direct polemical attack on society and men (as in *Pansies* and *Nettles*), focussing his attention almost exclusively on the non-human world; however, he has by now repeatedly expressed

misanthropic ideas in his letters and novels. He wants to "realise the tremendous *non-human* quality of life – it is wonderful", as he writes in September 1914 (*CL*, p. 291). In *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* the poet expresses again and again, in different words, with different subjects, and with varying (symbolic) intensity, his vision of otherness in life. Frieda recalls the supreme importance of this for Lawrence:

Er wusste, ich bin D.H.Lawrence von Kopf bis Fuss.
Damit bin ich umgrenzt und darin lebt meine Seele.
Alles andere ist nicht ich, aber ich kann zu all dem,
was nicht ich in der Welt ist, in Beziehung treten und
je mehr ich das *Anderssein* der übrigen Dinge um mich
begreife, um so reicher bin ich. [*italics mine*] ²

This otherness can only be known by the whole man, with mind and senses and intuition. Revealingly, Lawrence explores otherness through sensory perception; we will see, later, that divine otherness is also essentially arrived at by the same means, and never, primarily, through idea. "Some men", Lawrence writes in *Fantasia and the Unconscious*, "are born to be highly and delicately conscious."³ It is this heightened consciousness which enables the artist to control an excess of "mentality" and to prevent it from getting the better of his deeper, intuitive centres, as this would lead to destruction: "As soon as I have a finished mental conception, a full idea even of myself, then dynamically I am dead. To know is to die."⁴ In *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* Lawrence clearly ascribes to mental awareness the task of putting the unconscious in its right place and widening its realms (thereby regaining

the state of pristine man):

What we must needs do is to try to trace still further the habits of the true unconscious, and by mental recognition of these habits break the limits which we have imposed on the movement of the unconscious.⁵

Thus mental consciousness must check its own impositions and allow the artist's instinctive and darker self to come through to the extent that is necessary for the apprehension and understanding of his subject's otherness, which corresponds to his own dark soul. This kind of apprehension, which is essentially intuitive, is also basic to the perceptual creative act. Lawrence writes in "Introduction to these Paintings":

But by intuition alone can man *really* be aware of man, or of the living, substantial world. By intuition alone can man live and know either woman or world, and by intuition alone can he bring forth again images of magic awareness which we call art.⁶

The "intrusion of the mental processes", he tells us, "dims the brilliance, the magic of the first apperception", and it is again the sense of wonder, upon which the "sheer delight of a child's apperception is based"; the wonder, of which Lawrence found so much in nature, and so little in man, which is essential to this kind of seeing.⁷ This apprehension is unimposing, like that of the collier "looking down at a flower with that odd, remote sort of contemplation, which shows a *real* awareness of the presence of beauty".⁸ This is also what a critic calls Lawrence's "Adamic view", the "ecstasy of immediate vision, the

innocence of primitive perception".⁹

The poems most convincingly illustrate the relevance of this highly perceptual approach for the poetry. If the basis of a poem is the sensory apprehension of its subject (senses being part of the "dark soul" and the "lower centres"), leading to intuitive knowledge, it generally succeeds. If, on the other hand, it grounds upon a "finished mental conception", it usually fails.

Perception indeed is, in the best of these poems, the basic generative element, as their subjects are all natural, living and real. Real, they call for accurate description; living, they entail observation of motion and apprehension of e-motion (of subject and contemplator); natural, they require a reverent and unimposing attention and give rise to meditation on their meaning. *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* most completely embodies Lawrence's most prominent belief, that in the mystery of otherness; it describes what filled him most with awe, the wonder at natural life (including its sexual aspects); and it displays one of his most successful poetical techniques, the presentation of an actual object perceived, leading to the apprehension and expression of emotion and vision and to a symbolism based essentially on perception.

Now imagination, for Lawrence (his acute awareness that *image* is the root of this word emerges clearly from his writings) is "that form of complete consciousness in which predominates the intuitive awareness of forms, images,

the physical awareness".¹⁰ In fact, the descriptions in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* move on a highly concrete and tangible level. There is an intense *thingness* about the subjects in the poems, noted, among others, by Mark Schorer, who speaks of

...that element at the very heart of Lawrence's genius, the ability to convey the unique quality of physical experience that is so central to his power of communicating the spirit of places. This ability shows best in Lawrence's descriptions of non-human things, in his writings of animals, flowers and grass, fish, birds, snakes — a genius for identifying and defining the individual quality of life, the physical essences of things outside the personality, the not-me, the very *ding an sich*. Some of Lawrence's poems, notably those in the volume called *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, reveal this ability in its most intense purity....¹¹

This physical reality of Lawrence's poetical subjects marks a withdrawal from the perceptual quality, the luminosity, we found in some earlier poems; that quality he now calls "the grand escape into impressionism and pure light, pure colour, pure bodilessness", which is ultimately illusion, "*le grand néant*, the great nowhere", a purely optical or retinal truth; he now turns, as he believes Cézanne did, "to form and substance and *thereness*".¹²

This *thereness* of Lawrence's subjects is thus certainly due, in the first place, to accurate and vivid expression and perception, but it is more than that: the intuitive apprehension which runs parallel to the act of perception and is, indeed, part of it, is of supreme importance. In "Making Pictures" Lawrence writes:

The knowing eye watches sharp as a needle; but the

picture comes clean out of instinct, intuition and sheer physical action. Once the instinct and intuition get into the brush-tip, the picture *happens*, if it is to be a picture at all.¹³

The same applies to poetry, and the quality which is thus achieved Lawrence calls, in "Introduction to these Paintings", (Cézanne's) *appleyness*, "which carries with it also the feeling of knowing the other side as well, the side you don't see, the hidden side of the moon".¹⁴ One might argue that it is, in fact, the mind which knows that there is another side; but this knowledge, according to Lawrence, is a possibility, and theoretical; "the intuitions", instead, "work in actualities" and lead to full physical awareness or "sense-awareness" of an object. From the intuitive apprehension of the "other" physical side of an object it is not far to the instinctive, empathic knowledge of its nature and otherness. Again Lawrence sets instinct and intuition against mental consciousness, which alone can only create optical clichés, the "Kodak view":

For the intuitive apperception of the apple is so tangibly aware of the apple that it is aware of it *all round*, not only just of the front. The eye sees only fronts, and the mind, on the whole, is satisfied with fronts. But intuition needs all-aroundedness, and instinct needs insidedness. The true imagination is for ever curving round to the other side, to the back of presented appearance.¹⁵

It follows that this kind of intuitive apperception can never be static, but is always moving and developing; Lawrence speaks of the *shiftiness* of Cézanne's paintings,

and indeed, Lawrence's descriptions and images, as well as his symbols in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* are never exhausted or finished, but always involved in a process of evolution and change. This process is neither logical, nor exact in a technical sense. In *Etruscan Places* Lawrence asks:

...what, after all, is the horsiness of a horse? What is it that man sees, when he looks at a horse? — what is it that will never be put into words? For a man who sees, sees not as a camera does when it takes a snapshot, not even as a cinema-camera, taking its succession of instantaneous snaps; but in a curious rolling flood of vision, in which the image itself seethes and rolls....¹⁶

The technique of the poems reflects this belief in the dynamic quality of perception and recognition, of "knowing in full"; the cognitive poetical act includes a circling motion, a casual, improvisatory and associative procedure, penetrating the artistic subject by means of repeatedly varying points of focus, adding new perspectives, alternating between first sight, emotion and second sight, and combining to form an organic whole which gets nearest to the essential nature — external and internal — of the subject considered, and to its significance for the poet. This technique Gilbert aptly calls a "process of discovery"; it is a dialectic which she brings into relation to the similarly structured Lawrencian essay. The poems realize their dialectic either by means of a supposed antagonism between the poet and the reader, or between the poet and the subject (which involves an emotional attitude), or between the poet's mental consciousness and his blood-consciousness.

This cognitive process thus involves, on the level of expression, the "slightly modified repetitions" which help, in Auden's words, to "give his free verse a structure... their function is to act as stitches".¹⁷ Syntactically, there are many anaphoric questions, elliptical phrases without verbs, and newly coined adjective compounds; these include punning, reavealing Lawrence's awareness (denied him by critics like Henry Gifford and Franz Stanzel) of the generative, creative function of language and words in poetry.¹⁸ In fact, the verse is often highly onomatopoeic, reflecting its subject, and metre and rhythm create dynamic form, which is the phonetic expression of motion.

This associative technique of shifting perspective and improvisatory, cyclic approach has, however, a disadvantage: it is often the cause of the excessive length of the poems in this volume, which makes it difficult in some cases, and sometimes almost impossible, to find valid critical premises for the poem as a whole. Though the immediate reflection of substance in form is often superbly achieved, and though the clear thematic focus is given by the perceptual object, the accomplishment of theme on the formal level for the poem as a whole is not always apparent, owing to the heterogeneous quality of the verse. In some cases where it will not be possible to work out a higher structural correspondence, I will nevertheless strive to show the accomplishment and beauty of the immediate organic form in the perceptual passages.

One of the poems which is predominantly visual and, in my opinion, among the best in this volume, is "Sicilian Cyclamens" (CP, pp. 310-12). It describes the flower, the "ecstatic forerunner", and its coming awake, its opening from the inner mystery of creation, the darkness of earth, to an as yet non-mental, hardly conscious mode of being, and is paralleled with man's awakening, in the beginning, to his first dawn of revelation. In the poem the description of the flower is central and is embedded in the vision of the "Mediterranean savages" (with suggestions of Adam and Eve), which is a development from the delicate and attentive apprehension of the flower. These savages have been sightless till now, and for the first time feel "their foreheads bare, naked to heaven, their eyes revealed", and the "*light of heaven* brandished like a knife at their *defenceless eyes*" [*italics mine*]; the way they "saw tiny rose cyclamens between their toes, growing/Where the slow toads sat brooding on the past", is the same kind of seeing as the poet's, non-mental (the ultimate meaning of "defenceless"), immediate, Adamic:

Slow toads, and cyclamen leaves
Stickily glistening with eternal shadow
Keeping to earth.
Cyclamen leaves
Toad-filmy, earth-iridescent
Beautiful
Frost-filigreed
Spumed with mud
Snail-nacreous
Low down.

(11. 12-21)

The form strikes immediately: there is a transition from the long, anaphoric narrating lines of the first stanza, to the short, elliptical, alliterative lines of this second stanza. Perception is achieved in imagistic glimpses, each statement expressing a new quality or a new perspective as it is discovered. All the lines of the stanza quoted (lines 12, 13 and 16 being doubled) have two main strong stresses (a basic pattern for perceptual elements in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*), and all express visual perceptions; the only exception is the central line 17, which stands out by its single stress, and in fact contains the only not directly perceptual, but appreciative term. The complete picture of this stanza is framed by the only purely two-stressed first and last statement (indicative of the basic metre) "slow toads" and "low down", with their internal rhyme; this pattern is reiterated again later, and is also fundamental to that of the Lawrencian adjective compounds which now appear very frequently and are extremely successful here in the evocation of a shimmering world. The compounds combine a noun, consisting of an element or being belonging "low down", where the cyclamens are, with an appropriate adjectival attribute, descriptive both of the metaphoric noun-object and the flower.

Seeing is still the basis in the next stanzas, but includes, with its similes and metaphors, a kind of *in-seeing*, an act of intuitive perception, which I will call, to avoid confusion of terms and to stress the non-rational

element inherent in it, *in-feeling* or empathy, bringing in the "appley insidedness".

The shaking aspect of the sea
And man's defenceless bare face
And cyclamens putting their ears back.
Long, pensive, slim-muzzled greyhound buds
Dreamy, not yet present,
Drawn out of earth
At his toes.

Dawn-rose
Sub-delighted, stone-engendered
Cyclamens, young cyclamens
Arching
Waking, pricking their ears
Like delicate very-young greyhound bitches
Half-yawning at the open, inexperienced
Vista of day,
Folding back their soundless petalled ears.

(11. 22-37)

Expressions like "pensive", "dreamy, not yet present", "sub-delighted", or the flowers' looking out at the "inexperienced/Vista of day" (and, less metaphysical because of its external visual link, "half-yawning", "pricking their ears"), reflecting the barely conscious state of the flower, are of course interpretative translations. They are suggestive of the poet's own kind of apprehension, but they coincide so aptly with and stem so directly from the outer appearance of the flower that the introspection into the natural object is as convincing as the perception of it. (In "Flowery Tuscany" the violet — as the cyclamen is called later in the poem — is described by the same visual hound metaphor.)¹⁹ We note again the enumeration of findings (visual or inner), line by line, either linked by "and" or just set under each other, with hardly any

punctuation, forming, piecemeal and from single elements, the complete mosaic of the tessellated vision. The scarce punctuation, the caesura between the single images created by their arrangement in lines, together with the frequent use of present participles and the omission of a principal verb, heighten the sense of immediacy, of non-mental perception, and act as a dynamic factor adding to the coherence of the vision; yet at the same time they eliminate the presence of the persona, enhancing the impression of objectivity and *thereness*.

As the poem progresses, vision is intensified, similes and images are expanded by repetitions and associations, and new elements are added with every reiteration: the cyclamens, "Muzzles together, ears aprick,/Whispering witchcraft/Like women at a well, the dawn-fountain". Finally, the sense of myth and magic is perfected, the vision of a pre-Hellenic world which amounts to a literally second sight, is completed:

Greece, and the world's morning
Where all the parthenon marbles still fostered the
 roots of the cyclamen.
Violets
Pagan, rosy-muzzled violets
Autumnal
Dawn-pink,
Dawn-pale
Among squat toad-leaves sprinkling the unborn
Erechtheion marbles.

(11. 55-63)

The poem turns back to the evocation of the "world's morning" of the "Mediterranean savages" mentioned at the beginning,

framing the act of perception, which, being that of the savages as well as that of the poet, also represents, by repeated analogy, the cyclamen's non-mental way of experiencing the world. The mode of perception is thus identified with that of the object perceived. This has an important consequence: if the poet's perception aspires to be like that of the perceived, the natural object will be seen as it supposedly sees itself. Most of the *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* poems do even more than that: they aspire to describe their subject also as an apple might look "to an urchin, to a thrush, to a browsing cow, to Sir Isaac Newton, to a caterpillar, to a hornet, to a mackerel who finds one lobbing in the sea...."²⁰ Thus the immediate, almost objective physical *thereness* as well as the otherness of the subject is conveyed, and expression will tend to reflect, on the formal level, by sound, metre, line length, etc., the particular nature of the animal or plant perceived. The poem, in the perceptual passages, *is* the object it describes, and its form verifies this, sometimes very successfully, though the best poems in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* go beyond mere formal imitation of their subjects.

"Kangaroo", (*CP*, pp. 392-94) and "Autumn at Taos" are two other poems consisting almost entirely of visual elements. The kangaroo is the primæval creature which, by its posture, its external appearance, "all her weight, all her blood, dripping sack-wise down towards the earth's centre", indicates its belonging to the realm of otherness (low down, like the cyclamen), or rather, here, of

blood-consciousness; Australia, its home country, is identified with this quality, yet this conclusion is presented in the poem as a dimension, inspired by close observation, of the kangaroo itself. At the basis of the poetical material is a concrete, actual object which, throughout its symbolic, visionary evolution, is never lost from sight. Anaïs Nin's remark, relating mainly to Lawrence's novels, applies here, and holds good of most of the successful poems in this volume:

His [Lawrence's] sensorial penetration is complete. That is why his most abstract thought is always deep reaching: it is really concrete, it passes through the channels of the senses.²¹

The poem, in fact, is "bottom-heavy", like the kangaroo, who is, as a critic terms it, "'plotted out' almost graphically".²² The poet's apprehension adapts itself to the nature of its object, and his mode of perception is accordingly vertical, downwards, towards the "earth's deep, heavy centre":

Her sensitive, long, pure-bred face.
Her full antipodal eyes, so dark,
So big and quiet and remote, having watched so many
empty dawns in silent Australia.

Her little loose hands, and drooping Victorian shoulders.
And then her great weight below the waist, her vast
pale belly
With a thin young yellow little paw hanging out, and
straggle of a long thin ear, like ribbon,
Like a funny trimming to the middle of her belly, thin
little dangle of an immature paw, and one thin ear.

Her belly, her big haunches,
And, in addition, the great muscular python-stretch of
her tail.

(ll. 20-28)

The syntactical fragmentation gives the impression, as in "Sicilian Cyclamens", of a sequence of flash-like apprehended images, of lights thrown on the subject. The substance finds its reflection in the form through assonances and repetitions, line length and speed. While the first lines are regular in rhythm, almost solemn, the passage with the baby paw is more jerky and elastic with alliterations, and the last line stretches out broadly all the length of the mother kangaroo's tail.

The form, however, is not merely imitative of the subject, it also deepens and reflects the theme of the poem, which is the "downward drip" towards the otherness of the earth's centre. This "other" kind of life, which the poet believes to exist in Australia, as opposed to the northern hemisphere where the life-movement is generally that into the air, the mental leap, he also attributes, in *Phoenix*, to New Mexico: "On the superficies, horizontally, we've been everywhere and done everything, we know all about it. Yet the more we know, superficially, the less we penetrate, vertically."²³

It is the face, and particularly the eyes, which attract the poet's attention; watching the eyes of the other, and watching the other watching, and often watching him, is of central importance (see above, "A Doe at Evening"):

Still she watches with eternal, cocked wistfulness!
How full her eyes are, like the full, fathomless,
 shining eyes of an Australian black-boy
Who has been lost so many centuries on the margins of
 existence!

She watches with insatiable wistfulness.
Untold centuries of watching for something to come,
For a new signal from life, in that silent lost land
of the South.

(11. 38-43)

The interpretation or vision of what the kangaroo is looking for is as surely the poet's as the description of her eyes is true to life. Her eyes are by implication full of wonder, as is the poet, with the wonder required for the apprehension of true otherness.

There is a bad flaw, though, in the poem, due no doubt to the novelist's predilection for circumstantial detail, quite out of place in poetry. I mean the mentioning of the "white peppermint drop, which she loves"; this is a particular which not only introduces tame zoo-animal connotations, which is exactly what the free, "other" nature of the kangaroo does not stand for, but also, by its prosaic realism, divorces the subject from its symbolic function, as it does not contribute to or stand in any relevant connection with the theme; the pattern (or *gestalt*) which the poem abstracts from reality is disrupted.²⁴

Whereas "Sicilian Cyclamens" and "Kangaroo" contain the perception of a single object and its symbolic deployment, the excellent, concise "Autumn at Taos" is a landscape description effected by means of perceptual metaphors. It is quite different from the early impressionistic sceneries in its crystallized *thingness*; Lawrence himself gives a fairly accurate account of this kind of description:

Landscape, too, after being...a thing of pure luminosity and floating shadow, suddenly exploded, and came tumbling back on to the canvases of artists in lumps.²⁵

The poet, trotting through the countryside of New Mexico on his pony, describes the surroundings, and the actual theme of the poem and its poetic quality reside in the manner this landscape is presented. There is a dynamism, a livingness in the scenery that is indicative of the imminent mystery of otherness and its creative energy in all things. The landscape, entirely seen in terms of birds and beasts, is the vision itself. What is usually a development from the object of perception has here been directly identified with it and incorporated in it. The effect is that of a multi-layered, phantastic-realistic, visionary-visual energy-loaded landscape. I quote the whole poem (which is one of the few shorter pieces in this volume):

Over the rounded sides of the Rockies, the aspens of
autumn,
The aspens of autumn,
Like yellow hair of a tigress brindled with pines.

Down on my hearth-rug of desert, sage of the mesa,
An ash-grey pelt
Of wolf all hairy and level, a wolf's wild pelt.

Trot-trot to the mottled foot-hills, cedar-mottled and
piñon;
Did you ever see an otter?
Silvery-sided, fish-fanged, fierce-faced, whiskered,
mottled.

When I trot my little pony through the aspen-trees of
the canyon,
Behold me trotting at ease betwixt the slopes of the
golden
Great and glistening-feathered legs of the hawk of Horus;
The golden hawk of Horus
Astride above me.

But under the pines
I go slowly
As under the hairy belly of a great black bear.

Glad to emerge and look back
On the yellow, pointed aspen-trees laid one on another
like feathers,
Feather over feather on the breast of the great and
golden
Hawk as I say of Horus.

Pleased to be out in the sage and the pine fish-dotted
foot-hills,
Past the otter's whiskers,
On to the fur of the wolf-pelt that strews the plain.

And then to look back to the rounded sides of the
squatting Rockies,
Tigress-brindled with aspen,
Jaguar-splashed, puma-yellow, leopard-livid slopes of
America.

Make big eyes, little pony,
At all these skins of wild beasts;
They won't hurt you.

Fangs and claws and talons and beaks and hawk-eyes
Are nerveless just now.
So be easy.

(CP, pp. 408-9)

The theme of this poem, through and beyond the metaphorical description of the animate universe, is the dynamic correspondence of all things, basic to the "cosmic religion" Lawrence attributes to the Indians, and in which rocks, mountains, water, etc., are alive with an energy that man can come into contact with.²⁶ In his article "Introduction to these Paintings", Lawrence comments on the kinetic energy in landscape (we remember there are beginnings of this kinetic vision already in the nature descriptions of a poem like "The Wild Common"), which he finds in Cézanne's paintings:

In the best landscapes we are fascinated by the mysterious *shiftiness* of the scene under our eyes; it shifts about as we watch it. And we realize, with a sort of transport, how intuitively *true* this is of landscape. It is *not* still. It has its own weird anima, and to our wide-eyed perception it changes like a living animal under our gaze.²⁷

Both this energy and the correspondence of all things,

animate and inanimate, find their reflection on the formal level in a highly formative stress pattern. Interrelationship (a concept I will return to in my discussion of *Pansies*) is indicated by the frequent metrical parallels in expressions describing the landscape and its metaphoric "animalizations":

/ x x / x

sides of the Rockies
aspens of autumn
sage of the mesa
brindled with aspen

/ x x /

under the pines

/ x x / x

hair of a tigress
hairy and level
glistening-feathered
fish-dotted foot-hills

/ x x /

legs of the hawk.

It also shows in obvious metrical and con- and assonantic pairs like

mottled foot-hills

otter's whiskers.

The adjective compounds echo this pattern (with the same two-stress basis as the perceptual adjective terms in "Sicilian Cyclamens"). They have an exceptional visual power, often enhanced by the combination of a colour or structural adjective with an animal carrier, and thus again blending visionary metaphor with direct visual perception:

silvery-sided
fish-fanged
fierce-faced
jaguar-splashed
puma-yellow
leopard-livid

Their alliterative quality conveys the sense of suspended energy which is released in sibilants and repeated plosives

as in line 27. The choriambic double-stress pattern / x x / (x)

as well as the three strong stresses / / / of

an ash-grey pelt
a wolf's wild pelt
a great black bear

indicating the power of wild life, find a kind of inversion
or contrast in the pattern x x / x of

I go slowly
They won't hurt you
So be easy

expressive of the resting, static quality of the potential-
ly kinetic life energy. Stillness, poise and tranquillity
are always for Lawrence the effect of various forces and
tensions in harmony.

The poems I have discussed so far in this chapter may be
classed almost entirely as visual. They all have a realistic-
descriptive basis upon which predominantly perceptual meta-
phors and symbols are built up.

The poems I will now proceed to analyse contain,
though perception is again central to them, a good deal
of important non-visual elements, too.

"Fish" (*CP*, pp. 334-40) is a poem concerned with what
might be called an almost pure example of non-mental,
non-human, genuine otherness of being; the fish stands for
the incarnate blood principle, where life bubbles up prior
to any "mentality". If in discussing this poem I do not
consider it in its entity, I have my reasons for this:

highly organic as many passages may be, with form mirroring substance as perfectly as anywhere, the poem as a whole suffers from its numerous digressions and excessive length; the poet speaks in many voices, and in different styles, and I find it hard, in spite of my great admiration for this poem, to be convinced of its poetical unity. I am therefore analysing the elements which, notwithstanding its heterogeneity, yet make "Fish" an outstanding work of art.

As in the preceding poems, we are given, on the descriptive level, the observed details of the actual fish the poet has caught; the sudden accumulation of perceptual two-stress adjective compounds is evident in this passage (which occurs later in the poem):

Unhooked his gorping, water-horny mouth,
And seen his horror-tilted eye,
His red-gold, water-precious, mirror-flat bright eye;
And felt him beat in my hand, with his mucous, leaping
 life-throb.

(ll. 134-37)

But the general approach of the poem to its subject is more than visual: it already starts off with a kind of intuitive knowledge and interpretation of the fish, with an act of empathy or *in-feeling*, executed by the "dark soul" which works irrationally. In *Studies* Lawrence writes: "You can idealize or intellectualize. Or, on the contrary, you can let the dark soul in you see for itself."²⁸ The poem presents us with a translated, intuitive reality which seems to correspond perfectly to our sense of the

nature of the fish. The poet slips, as it were, into the skin of the fish, in a journey from an observational external to an inner fish-reality. Aldous Huxley comments on Lawrence's extraordinary capacity for *feeling in*:

He seemed to know, by personal experience, what it was like to be a tree or a breaking wave or even the mysterious moon itself. He could get inside the skin of an animal and tell you in the most convincing detail how it felt and how, dimly, inhumanly, it thought.²⁹

Needless to say, of course, any kind of empathy is human and thus subjective and individual. The fish, with its meaning and symbolism, is indeed highly Lawrencian and subjective; yet the poet succeeds in blending the personal and the "other" element, thus creating a new, untranslatable thing which is true to both. This is fundamental in any act of creation; Lawrence writes in "Morality and the Novel":

When van Gogh paints sunflowers, he reveals, or achieves, the vivid relation between himself, as man, and the sunflower, as sunflower, at that quick moment of time...

The vision on the canvas is a third thing, utterly intangible and inexplicable, the offspring of the sunflower itself and van Gogh himself.³⁰

"Fish" starts off with the interpretation and description:

Fish, oh Fish,
So little matters!

Whether the waters rise and cover the earth
Or whether the waters wilt in the hollow places,
All one to you.

Aqueous, subaqueous,
Submerged
And wave-thrilled.

The last line of each stanza contains the empathy, and lines two and five are clearly linked by a parallel stress pattern; lines three and four have an immediate organic form, i.e. one reflecting their immediate substance (usually subordinate to the theme of the poem) directly in sound:

[uə] alliterations and a trochaic-dactylic pattern combine to imitate the rocking of the waters and the fish, and the same effect is attained in the single, short lines.

These brief staccato lines, together with the use of hard words, also embody the theme of the magic and otherness of the fish, as well as its free, self-sufficient and loose (detached - staccato) state.

The poem proceeds almost in an orgy of immediate organic form:

As the waters roll
Roll you.
The waters wash,
You wash in oneness
And never emerge.

Never know,
Never grasp.

Your life is a sluice of sensation along your sides,
A flush at the flails of your fins, down the whorl
of your tail,
And water wetly on fire in the grates of your gills;
Fixed water-eyes.

(ll. 9-19)

If one is tempted to call this form for form's sake, it should be clear that, apart from reflecting its subject, the sibilant alliterations also support the theme of otherness, of fish-life feeling. This non-human otherness of the fish is such that it can hardly be expressed by

words alone, except by negations, and requires massive formal sustenance by syntactic fragmentation, line arrangement, and onomatopoeia:

But oh, fish, that rock in water,
You lie only with the waters;
One touch.
No fingers, no hands and feet, no lips;
No tender muzzles,
No wistful bellies,
No loins of desire,
None.

(11. 22-29)

A kind of fish language is attempted, in abrupt statements, reduced to essentials, in lines which hang in the air syntactically as the fish floats in the water, single and disconnected (and in the perceptions the double-stress pattern reappears):

Himself,
And the element.
Food, of course!
Water-eager eyes,
Mouth-gate open
And strong spine urging, driving;
And desirous belly gulping.

(11. 43-49)

We even get the fish-eye view: "And I, a many-fingered horror of daylight to him" (line 149). Obviously the poet is attempting, and very successfully so, to present the fish in its *appleyness*. Finally, perception and empathy, together with a dramatic digression describing a confrontation with the actual fish, lead to reflection and meditation, the essence of which is the recognition and unmoralizing conclusion that the fish is ultimately inconceivable in its otherness, and to the admission that

They are beyond me, are fishes.
I stand at the pale of my being
And look beyond, and see
Fish, in the outerwards,
As one stands on a bank and looks in.

(11. 125-29)

(Nobody, I am tempted to say, looked more from *within*.)

The best passages of the poem, however, are those expressing perception and subsequent empathy, conveying the theme more directly and poetically than the explanatory, discursive part. R.P. Draper's remark applies perfectly to these passages:

It is a poem of wonderfully alive shifts of tone. In its language and rhythms it creates a sliding, elusive form of life that at once communicates directly, without the interposition of the explaining mind, the graceful freedom of 'otherness', and obliquely criticizes the messiness of human emotions.³¹

There is much description, combined with empathy, in the poems "Baby Tortoise" (CP, pp. 352-54) and "Tortoise Family Connections" (CP, pp. 356-58), which I consider the two best of the tortoise sequence. The baby tortoise, a forerunner like the cyclamen, and single, like the fish, is convincingly described, directly and by way of metaphor, with the familiar two-stress pattern on the central perceptual elements:

To open your tiny beak-mouth, that looks as if it
would never open,
Like some iron door;
To lift the upper hawk-beak from the lower base
And reach your skinny little neck
And take your first bite at some dim bit of herbage,
Alone, small insect,
Tiny bright-eye,
Slow one.

(11. 8-15)

Its nature, however, is difficult to fathom, and the poet proceeds towards the knowledge of the tiny reptile through a number of questions. The interpretation of the turtle and the symbolic meaning attributed to it have obviously passed through sensory perception and draw on its truth. Empathy (in the questions) is the indispensable link between the two, the observed details on the level of realism and the meditation on the subject, and true to both.

In "Tortoise Family Connections" the poet explicitly indicates the character of his approach to the animal (which is not only an unsentimental, but also non-human kind of empathy), by attributing this attitude to his subject, and thereby realizes his theme of identifying the turtle's singleness and otherness with his own: "It is no use my saying to him in an emotional voice:/This is your Mother, she laid you when you were an egg" (ll. 11-12).

"Bat" (CP, pp. 340-42) starts off with landscape painting in a never-ending, subordinate clause fostering expectation, using long, narrative lines. Suddenly, the reader is roused by a direct address in the imperative:

Look up, and you see things flying
Between the day and the night;

(ll. 9-10)

Then he is presented with the thing which, the poet gradually realizes, must be a bat, in nervous, jerky, kinetic lines, intonation hovering at a high pitch and kept up by an onomatopoeic explosive alliteration and

assonance, with a falling metre in the last line, expressive of the flight of the creature.

Dark air-life looping
Yet missing the pure loop...
A twitch, a twitter, an elastic shudder in flight
And serrated wings against the sky,
Like a glove, a black glove thrown up at the light,
And falling back.

(ll. 19-24)

The verse is an example of Lawrence's dynamic form which he from now on uses more frequently and successfully, describing motion in substance and form; however, there is something in these lines which is more than descriptive, as detectable from the terms used to convey perception.

This becomes obvious as the poem proceeds:

Bats, and an uneasy creeping in one's scalp
As the bats swoop overhead!
Flying madly.

Pipistrello!
Black piper on an infinitesimal pipe.
Little lumps that fly in air and have voices indefinite, wildly vindictive;

Wings like bits of umbrella.

Bats!

(ll. 31-38)

There is the expression of recoil from the creature, which is not empathy or *in-feeling*, but the poet's emotional, instinctive reaction of repulsion, what I call his *feeling towards*. There is an inability in the poet to accept and attend to the otherness and the true nature of the bat, which might link perception to symbol: creatures "hanging

upside down like rows of disgusting old rags/And grinning in their sleep". As acknowledgement becomes increasingly problematic, empathy becomes impossible. This is even more explicit in "Man and Bat" and in "Mosquito", because the conflict between the poet's wish to *feel in*, to "watch in wonder", and his *feeling towards* is included in the poem and dramatized, generating the admission that the repulsive or hateful creature has its own right to live and be.

Gilbert comments on "Bat":

Yet the poet is willing to concede that one might have a different view of the bat; perhaps, he suggests, his vision of the creature's thingness is only a function of his own feeling about it.

(*Acts of Attention*, p. 168)

In "Man and Bat" (CP, pp. 342-47), in fact, this concession is unmistakable. The lines given in italics (not a very successful poetical device) are the audible or near-audible expression of the poet's *feeling towards*, which is almost hysteria, or, in the last stanza, the bat's own *feeling towards*. The poem gradually progresses, through close observation and direct confrontation with the alien creature, from a frenzied horror to an approach, an admission of and meditation on the "other" nature of the bat (and a realization of the poet's two conflicting selves which the creature reveals), and finally, to some kind of empathy – at the limits of human capacity – and bat speech. Potential hysteria is overcome by perception. This process of the "emotional mind" is not logical, or

rational, but associative and intuitive; it makes, as when we are "thinking and feeling at the same time", "curious swoops and circles" like the bat, to use Lawrence's own words.³² The poem, in its structure as well as the action it describes, works like the oracles of which Lawrence writes:

They were supposed to deliver a set of images or symbols of the real dynamic value, which should set the emotional consciousness of the enquirer, as he pondered them, revolving more and more rapidly, till out of a state of intense emotional absorption the resolve at last formed; or, as we say, the decision was arrived at. As a matter of fact, we do very much the same in a crisis.³³

At first, description is coloured by *feeling towards*; the animal is "disgusting", "insane", with an "impure frenzy" (which is really the poet's, as this does not exist in nature according to Lawrence), and watched relentlessly by the poet. The returning, breathless quality of the lines, the maddening repetitions, reflect the bat's terror-stricken spinning, and as it gets tired, the lines pause, shorten and totter:

Round and round and round
Near the ceiling as if in a web,
Staggering;
Plunging, falling out of the web,
Broken in heaviness,
Lunging blindly,
Heavier;
And clutching, clutching for one second's pause,
One little drop.

And I!
Never, I say....
Get out!

Flying slower,
Seeming to stumble, to fall in air.
Blind-weary.

(11. 77-92)

The excellent dynamic form of the verse is the immediate reflection of the animal-subject's motion, which is the visual-dynamic translation of fear; at the same time, it is also the expression of the poet's corresponding terror in auditive kinetic energy. The tiring of the bat runs parallel to the slackening of the psychic tension and resistance of the observer. The syntactic and metrical repetitions turning upon themselves thus not only mirror the bat's flight, but also thematize the poet's "dilemma" of being torn between repulsion and his feeling of man's obligation towards all life and the creature's otherness. Form is thus not merely reflective of the subject, but embodies the theme, which is, here, the attempt and effort to discover and accept the bat-form of otherness, rather than otherness itself.

As the poet gradually gets nearer to the realization of man's "wide-eyed responsibility/In life", to thought generated by observation and the empathy - *feeling towards* conflict, he is able to apprehend and describe the creature more closely and attentively: "With sticking-out, bead-berry eyes, black/And improper, derisive ears,/And shut wings,/And brown, furry body", and even "brown, nut-brown, fine fur!". The otherness of the bat is again evoked by a foreign word, such as the Italian *sghembo* (crooked, askew) and *pipistrello* (bat), strangely onomatopoeic of

the creature and its voice. Finally we are even given the bat's view of the poet, and its own *feeling towards*, relativizing the poet's, in curious bat language:

I believe he chirps, pipistrello, seeing me here
on this terrace writing:
There he sits, the long loud one!
But I am greater than he...
I escaped him....

(ll. 158-61)

Certainly the poem is, like many in this volume, in spite of its concentrated thematic focus, rather long; yet its length is necessary, I suppose, being indicative of the effort and time it takes for man to arrive at his bat self.

"Mosquito" (CP, pp. 332-34), a shorter and witty poem, shows how the careful attention to *feeling towards*, the presentation of emotional reality is, if not as far-reaching as the apprehension of empathy, certainly as important and true, and can finally lead to discovery. At this stage I have to point out that I am aware of the problems implied by the distinction between *in-feeling* and *feeling towards*: one might argue that, as both are emotions, no valid definition and differentiation can be made, because there is no criterion upon which such a definition can be based, except personal opinion. This is of course right; my distinction, however, is based solely on the *function* the feeling has in the thematic structure of the individual poem, where it either links perception and symbol and brings about a congruity between the otherness of both object and poet, or constitutes an element preventing rapprochement

and has to be overcome before a relationship is achieved.

The mosquito, in fact, seems to be even more remote than the bat. Its description is given almost entirely in terms of — an extremely convincing — emotional reality; the insect is regarded as an enemy, and addressed directly as an equal with whom a fight is fought, literally, to the blood. The poem works mainly in syntactic and semantic parallelisms, expressive of the equalization of object and poet. This is manifest in symmetries such as "man or mosquito", "you don't know that I exist, and I don't know that you exist", or "am I not mosquito enough to out-mosquito you?". Personification and humanization of the insect serve the same purpose: the mosquito is tauntingly called "Monsieur", is suspected of tricks, evil intentions, and attributed a visualized calculating — human — awareness: "Settle, and stand on long thin shanks/ Eyeing me sideways, and cunningly conscious that I am aware,/You speck", and, in the poet's visual imagination, appears microscopically anthropomorphic: "You turn your head towards your tail, and smile". It is in the last stanza that the poet, who believes he has beaten the insect at its own game, discovers that they have not fought on the same level or with the same weapons, and the word "queer", anticipated in stanzas six and nine, expresses the perplexed realization, brought about by visual evidence, of the unequal distribution of strength:

Queer, what a big stain my sucked blood makes
Beside the infinitesimal faint smear of you!

Queer, what a dim dark smudge you have disappeared into!

(11. 71-73)

The metrical parallel and the consecutive four weak stresses in "the infinitesimal" and "you have disappeared into" emphasize the disintegration to nothingness of the insect, which is even more disturbing than its presence, and the hint of a rhyme in the two last lines is expressive of a new kind of correspondence, not that of supposed equality on the human plane, but on the – literally and perceptually apprehended – symbolic level.

It is interesting to note that directly presented personal involvement does not, in these poems, lead to the venting of anger or dogmatism. The poet is not expounding an opinion about an animal; rather, he is interested exclusively in the subject, its aspect and nature, in perception and *appleyness*, which includes its otherness and thus its significance to man.

A group of poems, including "Pomegranate", "Peach", "Medlars and Sorb Apples", "Grapes", "Cypresses" and the famous "Snake", develop a more differentiated symbolic approach than the poems discussed above; they have, as it were, a double subject. Whereas there is also the perception and presentation of an actual plant or animal, with metaphorical evolution and meditation prompted by and closely related to it, the meaning or symbolic function stands as much for itself as the description does, and

takes on various forms: witty ("Pomegranate", "Peach"), visionary ("Medlars and Sorb Apples", "Grapes", "Cypresses"), or moralizing ("Snake").

"Snake" (CP, pp. 349-51) has been widely discussed and requires no further analysis. Yet there is one item on the thematic level which makes me feel uneasy about its success. The poem is a dialogue between the poet's two selves, which is brought into focus and externalized by the encounter with the snake. The conflict, however, between empathy and *feeling towards* – even though recognition of the kingly otherness of the snake is there and perfectly realized in form and substance – does not lead to the vision of life-correlation, but to self-condemnation and sermonizing. When the preoccupation of the poem turns to the "paltry", "mean act", and to the "voices of my accursed human education", the moralizing tone cannot be overlooked. It is not as in "Man and Bat", where the poet attributes his attitude to the creature to his inability to fully accept and understand its otherness, and leaves it at that; here, the *feeling towards* is not acknowledged as having its own right and place in human reality (though man must always strive to overcome it), but is condemned and blamed on society and education. Obviously, conclusion does not, here, as in the other poems – and this is essential – arise from and correspond to perception, but is divorced from it.

In "Pomegranate" (CP, pp. 278-79) and "Peach" (CP, p. 279) the poet addresses, as a means of dialectic,

the reader directly, who — particularly in "Peach" — is supposed a priori to be a sexual moron and puritan who gets angry at the poet's outspoken (self-)satisfaction. Wit, which with Lawrence often slips — as in *Pansies* — into biting satire or cynicism, is in these poems, even though accompanied by a sardonic grin, essentially good-humoured, and is controlled by attentive concentration throughout the poems on the reality of the fruit. The Donnean beginning of "Pomegranate" and the frequent consecutive anaphoric questions in both poems suggest argumentative matter, which is however successfully integrated in the vision; still, there are some items in these discursive passages verging on colloquial language.

"Peach" is worth looking at more closely. The poem is written in a predominantly syntactic free verse and has a carefully integrated thematic structure which is essentially cyclic, generating irony. The puritan reader is himself stripped of sensuous life-flesh like the peach stone, "wrinkled with secrets/And hard with the intention to keep them"; he works with his head and only produces geometric billiard balls (again, perceptual elements derived logically from the subject are used as metaphor for an inner reality). He is generously offered the stone by the poet, an image of his implicitly useless and ineffective mental self. By being armed with this pseudo-weapon the reader is put in an a priori defenceless position. This represents exactly the essence of irony: what is said or done is at the same moment annulled and undone again by

the action itself. The poet, however, though seemingly setting against the puritan's outlook an actual, carefully observed natural object - always and unquestioningly carrying otherness and thereby implying sexuality - is really using the peach as an argument, investing it with his own personal symbolism deducted from its appearance, and is thus employing the mental weapons he denies his reader. This, in fact, is the double irony of the poem, achieved by the perceptual basis of the metaphor: it is the poet, really, who is throwing the stone. Obviously, this is a much more successful and poetical way of tackling themes which become central in *Pansies*, but are handled extremely inadequately in that volume.

"Medlars and Sorb Apples" (CP, pp. 280-81) and "Grapes" (CP, pp. 285-87), and parts of "Cypresses" (CP, pp. 296-98), carry the tone and themes of *Last Poems*. The fruits or trees conjure visions of a journey to the otherworld, or to the dark pre-world, where there was that sensuous "magic of life", of which "we have buried so much". Of these poems, "Medlars and Sorb Apples" is obviously the best (and one of the best of the whole sequence); its theme of visionary descent and its imagery are extremely close to those of the death poems. The poem has been carefully and thoroughly discussed.³⁴ The medlar, like the gentian, is the actual and natural object eliciting, as a sensory perception, visions of the underworld and deathly experiences. The poem contains a complex corresponding and carefully worked out web of perception,

metaphor and symbol; Norma Schulman notes, referring to "Medlars and Sorb Apples":

Lawrence's poetry in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* is most successful where there is, in fact, a symbolic union of these two things which does not totally obliterate either the tangible, sensory object or the elusive mystery behind it.³⁵

The same can be said of "Grapes" and "Cyresses" (though both poems, unfortunately, end on an angry, uncontrolled and colloquial note, with too much opinion and too little poetry). Here the vision of a beautiful, magic, and pristine world is presented in all its sensuality. Sensory perception in "Grapes" is, indeed, hardly visual:

There was another world, a dusky, flowerless,
tendrilled world
And creatures webbed and marshy,
And on the margin, men soft-footed and pristine,
Still, and sensitive, and active,
Audile, tactile sensitiveness as of a tendril which
orientates and reaches out,
Reaching out and grasping by an instinct more delicate
than the moon's as she feels for the tides.

Of which world, the vine was the invisible rose,
Before petals spread, before colour made its disturbance,
before eyes saw too much.

(ll. 19-26)

This expresses Lawrence's growing doubt about the merely optical, the "mental-visual consciousness". This doubt here leads to what Lawrence believes Cézanne had intended to do in his paintings:

...he wished to displace our present mode of mental-visual consciousness, the consciousness of mental concepts, and substitute a mode of consciousness that was predominantly intuitive, the awareness of touch.³⁶

It also leads to that darkness which is inherent in "Grapes" and which dominates his last poems, and implicitly to another kind of seeing where the realistic-descriptive level loses its importance. Keith Alldritt speaks of a "striking sense of the imperfect coincidence of the visual and the optical".³⁷ As the frequently facsimile descriptions forming the basis of the symbolic evolutions of his subjects in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* disappear, there is a growth of a new kind of visionary perception which is no longer directly dependent on the actual phenomenal world, yet highly sensory. We are, so to speak, given the *appleyness* - or later godliness - without the "dead form".

Whereas the generative power, the control of the thematic focus of the poems discussed so far derive from and depend on the actual and imaginative perception of the poetical subject, the concern of the following group lies basically and primarily in the expounding of an idea, or the rationalizing of a feeling, by way of an animal; this animal, which has clear tool-character, may still be present in its actuality, albeit seen in short glimpses, standing out from the impositions and abstractions of the rest. If in the following I quote one or two of these passages, this is of course not to suggest that they "save" the poem as a whole in any way. My intention is the illustration of the dichotomy of representation based on perception and representation originating in the idea

or argument the poet wishes to formulate. The organic process from perception to empathy, to meditation and symbol is disrupted as it is reversed: when argument begets symbol and metaphor, proffered empathy can only be an imposition, alienated from the actual subject, and perception is isolated and remains on the simple level of descriptive reality. The poem falls, as it were, apart.

In poems of this kind Lawrence does what he himself, commenting on the paintings of Watts, greatly disapproved of (speaking of allegory):

But I say, all mysteries and possibilities lie in things and happenings, so give us the things and happenings, and try just to show the flush of mystery in them, but don't begin with a mystery and end with a foolish concrete thing....

(CL, p. 47)

Such poems are "Bibbles", "Ass" or "He-Goat". "Bibbles" lashes out at American, Whitmanesque democracy; other poems, including some of the tortoise sequence, are concerned with the theme of *Look!*, the conflict of the sexes and the inevitability of sex: they are a translation of very personal, Lawrencian experience and emotion into an animal. Though there is certainly merit in poems like "Lui et Elle" (CP, pp. 358-62), with its excellent observational details, there is also straightforward emotional projection, which I find hard to accept: the male turtle, "her husband", is called the "poor darling", "little old man", and the poet exclaims: "Alas, what a fool he looks

in his scuffle./And how he feels it!"; this, though possibly aspiring to (self-)irony, verges hard on sentimentality. The visible disparity between the large, matronly and apathetic female turtle and the small, frantic male may certainly be real and true; but it is the poet's projection of personal preoccupation that makes it humiliating and farcical; after having pleaded, in the foregoing poem, for not talking "in an emotional voice" to the creature, the poet is now attributing his human consciousness conflict to the turtle: neither *feeling in* nor *feeling towards*, but simply feeling sorry for himself. On the whole, however, the tortoise poems are formally and thematically achieved, and, taken as a sequence, form a relevant poetical entity.

"Ass" and "He-Goat" describe the slavery and humiliating domestic state the male has fallen into through love. "Ass" (CP, pp. 377-80) is a frightful specimen of sloppy, careless verse, and the translation of the bray of the ass (in italics) is hideous; here the devastating effect of uncontrolled argumentative and polemic treatment of the theme on diction and form is conspicuous. Only in the perceptual glimpses is there formal composure:

See him standing with his head down, near the Porta
Cappuccini,
Asinello, Ciuco,
Somaro;
With the half-veiled, beautiful eyes, and the pensive
face not asleep,
Motionless, like a bit of rock.

(ll. 55-59)

The overtones of *The Plumed Serpent* in "He-Goat" (CP, pp. 380-83) — "Forget the female herd for a bit,/And fight to be boss of the world", and the insistency on will — are unmistakable, and the interpretation of the goat's situation is not derived from perception and observation, and has nothing to do with the animal, but a good deal with Lawrencian frustration. I agree with Anaïs Nin that:

Too often he [Lawrence] uses animal life or nature to illustrate some human principle or emotion. And then worlds and metaphors are mixed, his plants and animals lose their identities, and his abstractions are made no clearer.³⁸

However, even in "He-Goat", we also get a flash of the actual goat — "yellow eyes incomprehensible with thin slits/To round-eyed us" — and of its corresponding symbolic quality: the goat, in its otherness, is Pan. This vision contains generative word power and is unencumbered by utilitarian intentions:

Sometimes he turns with a start, to fight, to challenge,
to suddenly butt.
And then you see the God that he is, in a cloud of
black hair
And storm-lightning-slitted eye.
Splendidly planting his feet, one rocky foot striking
the ground with a sudden rock-hammer announcement.

(ll. 18-21)

In the poem "Bibbles" (CP, pp. 394-400), as in "Figs", there is again a clear separation of perception and idea: the genuine description, the level of actuality, of the "little black snub-nosed bitch with a shoved-out jaw/And a wrinkled, reproachful look", "lobbing wildly through deep

snow like a rabbit,/Hurtling like a black ball through the snow,/Champing it, tossing a mouthful" is completely divorced from the condemnation and name-calling of the American, democratic "worse than a carrion-crow"; the poet is, indeed, as Gilbert puts it, "seeing a horror out of his own mind" (p. 146).

The disruption in all these poems is both formal and semantic, and runs conspicuously parallel on the two levels; there are rhythmically controlled descriptive passages, and there are passages full of abstractions and polemics verging into prose and slap-dash.

There are, finally, quite a number of poems in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* which may be termed abstract, formulating Lawrence's political theories and of no great significance within the scope of this work. Poems like "The Revolutionary" (where the persona is, in fact, as blind as Samson optically), "The Evening Land" (an intellectual dialogue with America), "Hibiscus and Salvia Flowers" (a polemical discourse on socialists, with strong affinities to *Pansies*, in its mechanically metrical and lampoon passages – the best parts of the poem, incidentally) and "The American Eagle" are completely lacking in sensory detail, and are full of tedious, hammering repetitions. What also distinguishes these poems and those of the last group from the perceptual poems discussed above is their intentionality. If a poet, according to Robin Skelton, is often not completely sure of what he wants to say in a poem until he has said it, this obviously does not apply to the argumentative poem,

where the idea which is formulated is premeditated.³⁹ It is impossible — in contrast to the stimulation of imagination by perception — for a subject to develop, and there is, in fact, a predominantly static quality, full of dead repetition, in such poems, as will be found again in the next volume.

¹Keith Alldritt speaks of the "specifically visual impact of Italy upon Lawrence" and the "almost painful visual richness of the Italian landscape", and proceeds: "The darkness of life in industrial England, which is established as, at its most living, a matter of attitudes, humours and ironies, is displaced by a sudden onset of light, colour and texture." (*The Visual Imagination of D.H.Lawrence*, p. 146).

²Frieda Lawrence, *Nur der Wind...*, p. 118.

³D.H.Lawrence, *Fantasia and the Unconscious*, p. 65.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁵D.H.Lawrence, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, p. 212.

⁶D.H.Lawrence, *Phoenix*, p. 556.

⁷D.H.Lawrence, "Hymns in a Man's Life", *Phoenix II*, p. 598.

⁸D.H.Lawrence, "Nottingham and the Mining Countryside", *Phoenix*, p. 137.

⁹Charles J. Glicksberg, "The Poetry of D.H.Lawrence", *New Mexico Quarterly Review*, 18 (1948), p. 298.

¹⁰D.H.Lawrence, "Introduction to these Paintings",
Phoenix, p. 574.

¹¹Mark Schorer, "Lawrence and the Spirit of Place",
in *A D.H.Lawrence Miscellany*, p. 285. See also Del Ivan
Janik, "Towards 'Thingness': Cézanne's Painting and
Lawrence's Poetry", *Twentieth Century Literature*, 19
(1973), 119-28.

¹²D.H.Lawrence, "Introduction to these Paintings",
Phoenix, p. 574.

¹³D.H.Lawrence, *Phoenix II*, p. 603.

¹⁴D.H.Lawrence, *Phoenix*, p. 579.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 579.

¹⁶D.H.Lawrence, *Etruscan Places*, pp. 72-73.

¹⁷W.H.Auden, *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays*, p. 290.

¹⁸Henry Gifford believes Lawrence lacked "the effort
of attention to words" ("The Defect of Lawrence's Poetry",
Critical Quarterly, 3 (1961), p. 166), and Franz Stanzel
writes of "Lawrences Misstrauen gegen die mitschöpferische
Leistung der Sprache, die sich in den sprachlichen Aus-
drucksträgern der Lyrik vollzieht" ("G.M.Hopkins, W.B.Yeats,

D.H.Lawrence und die Spontaneität der Dichtung", *Wiener Beiträge zur Englischen Philologie*, 66 (1957), p. 183).

¹⁹See "Flowery Tuscany", *Phoenix*, p. 50.

²⁰D.H.Lawrence, "Art and Morality", *Phoenix*, p. 524.

²¹Anaïs Nin, *D.H.Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study*, p. 78.

²²Norma M. Schulman, "D.H.Lawrence's *Birds, Beasts and Flowers: Five Kinds of Poetry*", p. 91.

²³D.H.Lawrence, "New Mexico", *Phoenix*, p. 141.

²⁴Norma M. Schulman has noted this rupture of levels: "...where this detail appears in the poem, we are forced to suspend the figurative meaning which the kangaroo has acquired, for probabilities and discontinuities which are closer to those of ordinary, *unstructured* reality. In effect, we are plunged from the realm of the symbolic, which induces a vaguer, more generalized reading of the image of the kangaroo, into a world of isolated particulars which is, by and large, the sphere of the realistic-descriptive poetry..." ("D.H. Lawrence's *Birds, Beasts and Flowers: Five Kinds of Poetry*", pp. 69-70).

²⁵D.H.Lawrence, "Introduction to these Paintings", *Phoenix*, p. 565.

²⁶See "New Mexico", *Phoenix*, pp. 146-47.

²⁷D.H.Lawrence, "Introduction to these Paintings",
Phoenix, 580-81.

²⁸D.H.Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*,
p. 25.

²⁹See "Introduction", *The Letters of D.H.Lawrence*,
Volume I, edited and introduced by Aldous Huxley (Leipzig,
1938), p. 40.

³⁰D.H.Lawrence, *Phoenix*, p. 527.

³¹R.P.Draper, "Satire as a Form of Sympathy: D.H.
Lawrence as a Satirist", in *Renaissance and Modern Essays*,
p. 197.

³²See *Phoenix*, pp. 249-50.

³³D.H.Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, p. 81.

³⁴See Sandra Gilbert, *Acts of Attention*, pp. 185-89,
and Hebe R. Bair, "Free Verse Prosody: The Poetry of D.H.
Lawrence", pp. 198-210.

³⁵Norma M. Schulman, "D.H.Lawrence's *Birds, Beasts
and Flowers: Five Kinds of Poetry*", p. 92.

³⁶D.H.Lawrence, "Introduction to these Paintings",
Phoenix, p. 578.

³⁷Keith Alldritt, *The Visual Imagination of D.H. Lawrence*, p. 204.

³⁸Anaïs Nin, *D.H.Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study*,
p. 135.

³⁹See Robin Skelton, *The Poetic Pattern*, p. 17.

PANSIES, NETTLES AND MORE PANSIES: PHENOMENAL DIVINITY
VERSUS HUMAN REALITY

Comparing the poems of this uneven and large collection – written between 1927 and Lawrence's death, and expressing, in his own words, "merely the breath of the moment" ("Foreword" to *Pansies*, CP, p. 424) – to the preceding *Birds*, *Beasts and Flowers*, one is immediately struck by their brevity. This brevity is, in a way, compensated by the arrangement of the single poems in subject clusters, comprising a number of poems on the same subject, in a logical or associative order, though unfortunately often redundant in their statements. What in *Birds*, *Beasts and Flowers* consisted of a single long poem now seems to be dished up in fragments. It is obvious that much must be lost by this procedure: instead of unity, coherent development and deepening vision through attentive observation and concentration there is often superficiality and uninspired repetition. Thus the breathlessness of the poems – an effect due, according to several critics, to Lawrence's progressing illness – is reflected in form as well as in substance: if the poems are predominantly short, they also display an impulsive and impatient reiteration of themes, with a frequently agitated voice and a rapid and careless style. Another predominant feature of many *Pansies* (as I will in the following call all the poems which figure in *Pansies*, *Nettles and More Pansies*) is the comparative absence of the perceptual element, the frequent substitution

of abstraction and idea for image, of exposition for symbol. However, there are a few exceptions to this, and it is these exceptions which display most intensely the developing power of Lawrence's visionary poetry. It is necessary, therefore, to differentiate between two basic kinds of Pansies, which I call the *negative* and the *positive* Pansy, with the former admittedly constituting the bulk.

The negative Pansy is, by and large, argumentative and polemical, prefigured in poems such as "Hibiscus and Salvia Flowers" or "The American Eagle". Revealingly, their degree of abstraction is such that they may be said to be completely lacking perceptual detail. The positive Pansy, on the other hand, closely linked to *Last Poems*, stands out eminently from the rest with its wealth of perceptual detail and visionary development. That breathless quality found in the other Pansies is here poetically achieved: the Lawrencian visual-visionary experiences of the divine are characterized by a brevity and rapidity which is reflected in the dynamic form of the verse, rather than resulting in carelessness and colloquialisms.

Never, interestingly enough, do we find the two kinds of Pansies in the same subject cluster. Obviously, the poet's attitude to his topic is the determinant; there are specifically "negative" subjects, and if man is considered in terms of these, he will always be in some way deficient, and so will the poem usually, too; other — mainly phenomenal — subjects, on the other hand, generate positive poems. If man appears in these (and he is the only pro-

tagonist who can be subject of both kinds of poems) he is seen as godly. The dichotomy thus is finally polarized in man.

The negative *Pansies*, which are almost always *against* something, comment upon work, money, the machine, iron, robot existence, class distinctions, politics, the bourgeois, democracy, modern woman, sex and egoism, as forms of excess in civilization and society. Though some of these tirades contain a good deal of sharp and far-sighted observation, sometimes witty, there is also an insistent didactic and moralizing strain, and an almost complete absence of any kind of poetically relevant form. I can't help being reminded, reading these poems, of Virginia Woolf's acrid remark that they "read like the sayings that small boys scribble upon stiles to make housemaids jump and titter".¹ Obviously, Lawrence's concern lies exclusively in the communication of his message, as is the case in a journalistic article (and at that time he was indeed busily writing articles). Although in the foreword to *Pansies* he calls his message a thought, a *pensée*, it is mostly what he claims it is not, namely a piece of argument. Moreover, this argument is often emotionalized, with Lawrencian idiosyncrasies or paralogisms which are the contrary of common sense. If the term *hysteria* can be applied at all to Lawrence's poems (as has been done rather indiscriminately), it is here

that I would use it. I am thinking of poems like "All That We Have is Life", "Ego-Bound Women", "What Would you Fight For?", "Always this Paying", and "We Can't be Too Careful", to name the worst, plus several of the *Nettles*. In these poems, the hysterical attitude of the poet to his subjects can be seen in the form: the incapacity - or rather, I suspect, the refusal - of the poet to go beyond the immediately polemic to a more comprehensive view of his subjects leads to lack of control and chaos on the formal level. Often we find Richard Aldington's "hammer, hammer, hammer of exasperation" (*CP*, p. 595) in the incessant repetitions of catchwords, displaying a deplorable lack of articulation. Obviously, when the handling of these becomes inadequate, this shows in the verse: form then merely reflects the attitude to the subject, instead of embodying the theme, and poetry is reduced to the blunt expression of an opinion. Just as form is required to follow some laws, either traditional or free verse patterns, so must theme be coherently and meaningfully patterned. When symbol, metaphor, or any kind of figurative language is missing, as is the case in these poems, theme must be very carefully structured, and form usually rather tight, if the poetry is not to run the risk of disintegrating.

Formal and thematic tightness is obviously the reason for the few exceptions where Lawrence succeeds in dealing

with this kind of unpretentious, polemic approach in poetry: in some examples of witty, parodic, rhymed verse, practically doggerel, of which W.H. Auden tells us:

The writer of doggerel, as it were, takes any old words, rhythms and rhymes that come into his head, gives them a good shake and then throws them on the page like dice where, lo and behold, contrary to all probability they make sense.

... [satirical doggerel] is the weapon of the outsider, the anarchist rebel, who refuses to accept conventional laws and pieties as binding or worthy of respect. Hence its childish technique, for the child represents the naive and personal, as yet uncorrupted by education and convention.²

This applies exactly to Lawrence's doggerel Pansies.

Written in a punning and comic vein, often bitingly satirical, in what Gilbert aptly calls a "Cartoon method"

(p. 214), a number of these poems defy Salgado's claim that "there is hardly a verse which comes back to one after the book is closed".³ Indeed, some of these poems enter the ear as easily as nursery rhymes do, to which they often bear a strong affinity (some are in fact parts of nursery rhymes). I will quote two specimens as an illustration:

I can't stand Willy wet-leg,
can't stand him at any price.
He's resigned, and when you hit him
he lets you hit him twice.

("Willy Wet-Leg", CP, p. 559)

Oh the innocent girl
in her maiden teens
knows perfectly well
what everything means.

If she didn't, she oughter;
it's a silly shame
to pretend that your daughter
is a blank at the game.

("The Jeune Fille", *CP*, pp. 564-65)

Form here has a parodic function: the pseudo-harmony attained by means of mechanical metre and partly forced (mock-)rhymes - in the manner of a lampoon - on the formal surface corresponds to the inherent theme of the phoney bourgeois attitude that everything is fine as long as outside appearances are respected.

However, not much of the verse flows quite as easily as that; there is much irregularity of rhythm and metre, and although doggerel does not need to be very regular, I agree with H.T. Moore when he says that clever poetry of this kind "requires more precision than Lawrence either could or would use".⁴ I have only to think of Lawrence's hopeless attempt at writing a simple limerick (cf. ["There Was a Gay Bird Named Christine"], *CP*, p. 846). Moreover, there are also a number of rhymed but unsatirical poems in which the rhyme-dependent metrical inadequacies and clumsy tournures of the early poems reappear.

The positive Pansy poems, consisting to a large extent of sensory elements, are concerned with nature (animals and flowers), the cosmos and with man, not as a member of society, but as an actual being, with form, face and eyes. If the concrete, visual thing is not, as in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, the real subject of the poem, it has yet the function of leading the poet to the central thought or to

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the expression of his emotion. Some few poems still carry a direct perception or observation (mostly of nature or a natural object), often linked with a comparison; others are purely visionary, using elements from reality metaphorically for the construction and creation of an imaginative vision or myth; whereas others again employ perceptual objects as similes or intermedia for emotional states. These are procedures we have already encountered, but I will show how they are put to particular use in the Pansy poems. There is also a technique which Lawrence now uses for the first time, and which I call *internalization*. It consists in the evocation of natural phenomena and their transference to a sometimes abstract, sometimes bio- and physiological inner world. This combination of external, sensory with mostly abstract elements and the internalization of the former into the latter can be seen as an expression of Lawrence's conviction that:

We and the cosmos are one. The cosmos is a vast living body, of which we are still parts. The sun is a great heart whose tremors run through our smallest veins. The moon is a great gleaming nerve-centre from which we quiver forever.⁵

This is closely related to his belief in a kind of pantheism or divine immanence referred to later in *Apocalypse*.

There is a considerable number of confessional poems (a genre not encountered since *Look! We Have Come Through!*) concerned with personal matters such as the poet's illness, failing desire, and his acceptance of it (equalling his unfaltering acceptance of death in his *Last Poems*). The

best of these, prefiguring the death poems, set the personal problems into a greater, often cosmic context, and are highly perceptual, or based upon a comparison with sensory elements.

On the whole, however, there is an obvious shift of emphasis in *Pansies* from the descriptive to an inner, visionary world (as in the internalizations). Many poems using phenomenal objects as external links concentrate on the vision or the meditations these objects evoke; the sensory object is relevant in its function as transmitter or symbol, but not in itself. In the best of these poems, the vision is conveyed in highly perceptual terms.

A passage from Lawrence's essay "Making Pictures" may serve to illustrate the shift to vision, divinity and pure *appleyness*:

One may see the divine in natural objects; I saw it to-day, in the frail, lovely little camellia flowers on long stems, here on the bushy and splendid flower-stalls of the Ramblas in Barcelona. They were different from the usual fat camellias, more like gardenias, poised delicately, and I saw them like a vision. So now, I could paint them. But if I had bought a handful, and started to paint them "from nature", then I should have lost them....Some men can only get a vision by staring themselves blind, as it were: like Cézanne; but staring kills my vision...

The only thing one can look into, stare into, and see only vision, is the vision itself: the visionary image.⁶

"Desire is Dead" is a beautiful little poem which, in its clarity and conciseness might figure in any Imagist anthology, and which I should relate to the poems on his mother's death rather than to *Look!*. It expresses, in a verse as composed as the emotion is controlled, the poet's

inner state in natural, perceptual terms, and terms which are frequently found in his later poetry: sun, water and trees.

Desire may be dead
and still a man can be
a meeting place for sun and rain,
wonder outwaiting pain,
as in a wintry tree.

(CP, p. 504)

I hardly need to point to the regularity of the basically iambic metre, which, with its variations, works mainly by semantic stress and symmetry. The emphasis on "wonder" (thematically crucial) is attained by the substitution of iamb by trochee, where the insertion of an *of* or *and* to maintain the metrical pattern had almost imposed itself. The two strong alliterations "desire/dead, wonder/wintry" mark the complementary nature of the opposing pairs; the stress on "be", due to metre and rhyme on "tree", makes it stand for itself, too, indicating life, as opposed to "dead".

"After all the Tragedies are over" (CP, pp. 508-9) is another poem relating the poet's declining strength to the surrounding natural world, and by this association mitigating the sense of deterioration which is not a "falling away" but an organic "falling into" the great natural process and principle of Life which includes death. (The quatrain "Old Song" is a kind of synopsis of this theme in a single image.) Internalization, though implied, is not yet literal and simile prevails: what is left, when all the

tragedies are over, are "strange cold stretches of sand" which seem to be in the poet, but he is *like* the external "wide foreshores where not a ripple is left", and *like* "sorry, far-out clay".

In "Desire Goes Down into the Sea" internalization becomes explicit, evoking a hermetic world:

I have no desire any more
towards woman or man, bird, beast or creature or thing.

All day long I feel the tide rocking, rocking
though it strikes no shore
in me.

Only mid-ocean.—

(CP, p. 454)

The enumeration of the second line, its elongation, has, as it were, the effect of shortening the first: formally, by relation, and thematically, by restricting and eliminating desire. The second stanza is an example of dynamic form, metre and repetition reflecting the movement of the waters; the two short words "in me", set as a single line (instead of being added to the preceding one), evoke the impression of hanging in the air, as the tide which finds no foothold, and also keep the voice at a certain pitch with the use of a new line, so that, in fact, it "goes down into the sea" in the last line-stanza, which is a syntactic fragment that has no end and no beginning, only a disconnected mid-part, like the ocean. The central theme of isolation and desirelessness is thus realized formally.

The poem belongs to an ocean series including "Moon

Memory", "There is Rain in Me", "The Sea, the Sea" and "November by the Sea". In *Studies in Classic American Literature* Lawrence writes: "...the blood of all men is ocean-born. We have our material universality, our blood-oneness, in the sea."⁷ In fact, the waters in these poems are internalized in their changing aspects and effects, establishing on the metaphoric level the vital link of man with the world and the universe, and celebrating the divine correspondence of all things, that correspondence from which in the negative Pansies man has fallen to what is, for Lawrence, the real death.

In "There is Rain in Me" (preceding "Desire Goes Down into the Sea" with its still connected passionate inner life) the internalized oceanic landscape, a black mass with white foam tips, an "old ocean" as angry as the God of the Old Testament, is in its turn characterized by a visual simile. I quote the whole poem:

There is rain in me
running down, running down, trickling
away from memory.

There is ocean in me
swaying, swaying O, so deep
so fathomlessly black
and spurting suddenly up, snow-white, like snow-
leopards rearing
high and clawing with rage at the cliffs of the soul
then disappearing back with a hiss
of eternal salt rage; angry is old ocean within a
man.

(CP, p. 454)

The poem is a beautiful example of dynamic form: the swift succession and flow of drops finds its auditive expression

in the repeated "running down" and in the onomatopoeic "trickling". The regular beat of the ocean reflected in the metrical pattern of line five (by repetition and insertion of "O" for the rhythm's sake) suddenly becomes wildly agitated, the verse gathers speed, and the voice is raised: enjambements, an increase of rapid dactylic feet (line eight: / x / x x / x x / x x /) and double-stressed, high-pitched insertions (line seven: "snow-white") mark the climax. Then the rhythm relaxes and becomes irregularly conversational, and the waters fall back with an onomatopoeic "hiss", and only the internal rhyme "rearing/disappearing" reminds us of the former storm.

"Moon Memory" and "November by the Sea" include the internalization of sun and moon, and thereby point towards Lawrence's cosmic poems. The silvery moon with its "white gleam" ("Moon Memory", *CP*, p. 453), just like the cosmic swan's "silky glitter" ("The Triumph of the Machine", *CP*, p. 625), the shimmer of the peacock ("Peacock", *CP*, p. 530), the glisten of leaves ("The Difference", *CP*, p. 615), or man "with sun in his face", thrilling "with glittering rays" ("Sun-Women", *CP*, p. 526), is a manifestation of the presence of the gods, who are immanent in all things. Relevantly, the moon is also associated with the senses (cf. "New Moon", *CP*, p. 467), with colour, touch and smell. The *chiaroscuro*, very marked in these ocean poems, particularly the last two, is always a sign of the divine in Lawrence's later poetry.⁸ Often, though, the gleam and glitter only appear in flashes and glimpses, and even in "Moon Memory"

it is a quivering, flickering light:

When the moon falls on a man's blood
white and slippery, as on the black water in a port
shaking asunder, and flicking at his ribs—

then the noisy, dirty day-world
exists no more, nor ever truly existed;
but instead
this wet white gleam
twitches, and ebbs hitting, washing inwardly,
silverily against his ribs
on his soul that is dark ocean within him.

And under the flicking of the white whip-lash of
the moon
sea-beasts immersed lean sideways and flash bright
in pure brilliance of anger, sea-immersed anger
at the trashy, motor-driven transit of dirty day
that has left scum on the sea, even in the night.

(CP, p. 453)

The image evoked in this poem is strange and surrealistic, and works mainly by contrast of light and dark, which is anticipated in the orthographical and consonantal symmetry of "moon falls/man's blood", moon and blood being indicative of a duality which is pursued through the rest of the poem. The white gleam is essentially dynamic and reviving (a quality which will become evident in *Last Poems*), and this is effectively expressed, on the formal level, by a series of onomatopoeic and sibilant alliterations "wet white gleam", "twitches", "hitting, washing", "white whip-lash") and an internal rhyme ("lash/flash"), enhancing the sense of elasticity and of force conveyed by the many consecutive strong stresses. Obviously such successful formal correspondence, even if it is only direct onomatopoeic dynamism imitative of the subject described, is the effect of visual perception and only achieved when such perception is involved.

In "November by the Sea", one of the best of the Pansies with its thematic and formal control, there is the other kind of gleam which is not silvery, but red rather, prefiguring the divine gleam of *Last Poems*. The poem, indeed, describing a visionary scene in intensely perceptual terms, including sight, sound, and something like touch, has close affinities, thematic and formal, with Lawrence's death poems. I quote it in its entirety:

Now in November nearer comes the sun
down the abandoned heaven.

As the dark closes round him, he draws nearer
as if for our company.

At the base of the lower brain
the sun in me declines to his winter solstice
and darts a few gold rays
back to the old year's sun across the sea.

A few gold rays thickening down to red
as the sun of my soul is setting
setting fierce and undaunted, wintry
but setting, setting behind the sounding sea
between my ribs.

The wide sea wins, and the dark
winter, and the great day-sun, and the sun in
my soul
sinks, sinks to setting and the winter solstice
downward, they race in decline
my sun, and the great gold sun.

(CP, p. 455)

As in "Moon Memory", there is an increased clustering of consecutive strong stresses or monosyllabic feet creating the solemn and incantatory rhythm of the later poems; the parallels in tone, rhythm and structure of the first stanza and "Now it is autumn and the falling fruit/and the long journey towards oblivion" ("The Ship of Death", CP, p. 716)

are conspicuous. What is expressed in "Bavarian Gentians" in terms of deepening darkness, a darkening which runs parallel to the descent, the downward death-journey, is here, by a very similar technique of alliteration, repetition and metrical pattern, directly described as motion, as the sinking of the inner, metaphorical sun, which finds its immediately established correspondence in the outside day-sun. The insistence on life-hope-sun by repeated accentuation in the three-stress pattern of the perceptual "few gold rays", "great day-sun", "great gold sun", the symmetrical structure and the onomatopoeic sinking in the last two stanzas express the irrevocability of the decline as well as the composure and acceptance of the poet, as his waning strength is included in the great cycle of nature and the universe.

In "Sun in Me" (*CP*, p. 513), where the poet has passed "beyond tragedy" and turns, having gone through the stage of not-being (cf. "After all the Tragedies are over" and "Nullus"), to a belief in a new resurrection, which revealingly is essentially in the flesh (cf. "The New World"), he sees the sun rise again on his "inner ocean". It is a baffling feature of Lawrence's poetical development that in his last poems, in the face of death, he celebrates his concept of resurrection in the most perceptual and sensory terms, whereas the expression of the experience of rebirth through sexuality in *Look!* had been highly abstract. In this poem the sun, which is all-pervading as well as manifold, is identified with the immanent gods: apart from the

metaphorical internalized "sun in me" and the actual "sun in heaven", there is, correspondingly, the sun of the macrocosm and the microcosm, the mythical sun beyond which is the "immense sun behind the sun", and the "sun within the atom/which is god in the atom".

There is a whole sun series in *Pansies*, including "Space", "Sun-Men", "Sun-Women", "Democracy", "Aristocracy of the Sun", "Conscience", "The Middle Classes" and "Immortality", but as the titles indicate, it soon deteriorates into negative Pansies, as the sun becomes a mere metaphor for what it is not, and the poet indulges in the sunlessness of man and in the social criticism he heaps upon him.

The swan series is another group belonging to the cosmic poems, comprising "Swan", "Leda", "Give us Gods", "Won't it be Strange—?" and "Spiral Flame"; these poems may be termed mythical. The swan (sometimes also a goose, cf. e.g. "Gods") is the "creative-destructive mystery of the cosmos", as a critic calls it, an irrational and unfathomable symbol (cf. "Relativity") for the divine principle of Life.⁹ The vision of "Swan" is interestingly built up of a combination of visual and abstract elements, evoking a supernatural, potent and uncanny dark world, an otherworld less familiar than all the preceding. If it is, admittedly, less imagistic than F.S.Flint's "The Swan", it is yet more powerfully visionary. The remote majesty of the first stanza is conveyed by the said mixing of abstract and sensory terms on the substantial level, and by line

arrangement and its acoustic effect, reflecting the described slow-motion rhythmical beat as well as the impression of unlimited space (by single words isolated or lost in a whole, potentially fillable empty line), on the formal level:

Far-off
at the core of space
at the quick
of time
beats
and goes still
the great swan upon the waters of all endings
the swan within vast chaos, within the electron.

For us
no longer he swims calmly
nor clacks across the forces furrowing a great gay
trail
of happy energy,
nor is he nesting passive upon the atoms,
nor flying north desolative icewards
to the sleep of ice,
nor feeding in the marshes,
nor honking horn-like into the twilight.

But he stoops, now
in the dark
upon us;
he is treading our women
and we men are put out
as the vast white bird
furrows our featherless women
with unknown shocks
and stamps his black marsh-feet on their white and
marshy flesh.

(CP, pp. 435-36)

The predominantly strong stress pattern is maintained throughout the poem, creating the solemn tone, and is concentrated again in the triple-stressed key terms "great gay trail" and "vast white bird"; the divine element, which is essentially what is expressed by this pattern, is

finally indicated also in the Lawrencian *chiaroscuro* in the last stanza.

"Leda" shows even better what the achievement of these poems is: a kind of concentration excluding verbosity and the formerly frequent prose character of the verse, and evoking a definite "sensory-plastic" impression. The poem's rich perceptual quality is hardly visual; it relies, rather, on audible and tangible sensations, expressed in words as meaning and sound, including, accordingly, non-visual perceptual adjective compounds. The doubly conveyed sense impressions are again not on the observational-realistic level, but purely imaginative (and, of course, highly symbolic). The nearer the poet approaches death, the more he locates his sensory faculties in and devotes them to an inner world, or a world beyond, which is not a spiritual world, but a world of heightened sensual awareness.

Come not with kisses
not with caresses
of hands and lips and murmurings;
come with a hiss of wings
and sea-touch tip of a beak
and treading of wet, webbed, wave-working feet
into the marsh-soft belly.

(CP, p. 436)

Formally, the sibilants in the first three lines (enhanced by half-rhyme), evocative of a weird sense of otherness, and, thematically, the negation of all that is normal and natural to human experience of love (kisses, caresses, hands, lips and voice), anticipate the non-human and onomatopoeic "hiss of wings", which is sound-movement, the

"sea-touch tip" which is sound-touch, and the highly alliterative (expressing continuity) "wet, webbed, wave-working", which is a sound-touch-movement and visual construction. It is revealing how the coming of the divine element is thematically and formally realized: there is a syntactic and semantic symmetry between "caresses/kisses" and the corresponding "hands/lips", which in their turn again correspond to "wings/beak"; but already the beak is characterized by a triple-stress attribute; the webbed feet, however, have no pendant in the foregoing and mark the impossibility of any further relevant correspondence, and the metrical pattern culminates in a no less than five-stress alliterative construction. The last line, finally, expresses the amalgamation of the human and the divine element in substance and form: the belly is curiously and vulnerably the woman's, but "marsh-soft" and the triple-stress pattern indicate the metamorphosis which has occurred through the influence of divine otherness. The poem illustrates, moreover, as many of the Pansies discussed above, the comparative success of the Lawrencian short poem.

In "When the Ripe Fruit Falls—" (*CP*, 504-5) the universal creative-divine principle is again presented in concrete and abstract terms, and the obvious purpose is to show its power to dissolve and also fuse both into a unity, a unity of man and godly otherness: the experience of fulfilled dead people "enters/the veins of living space, and adds a glisten/to the atom, to the body of immortal chaos", and the gleaming swan "whose feathers glisten/

silky with oil of distilled experience" is the abstract which is made visible, in an act of materialization which is essentially the birth of God (cf. "God is Born") and, in fact, the birth act of the successful late Lawrencian poem, too.

The connection of human life with the cosmos is often symbolized by the tree, which is the "tree of life", representing the universal coherence and the evolutionary process of which man is a part. (If he severs this connection he becomes self-centred; cf. "Free Will".) With its roots firmly planted in darkness, near the gods and otherness (cf. "Fatality"), the tree has leaves which are "aware" (cf. "Climbing Down"), suggestive of the gods "like flames and tunes" (cf. "Fallen Leaves"), which "glisten and shake" (cf. "The Difference"), because there is an organic connection between leaves and tree, as there should be between man and cosmos. The material the tree consists of is seen as positive and even restoring for man, as in "Food of the North", where the poet asks to be anointed "with the lymph of silvery trees" of the south; in "Bowls" it is the tactile perception of the "soft-skinned wood/ that lives erect through long nights" which is sought. The tree also embodies the natural process of decay and renewal and is compared to man (cf. "Desire is Dead" and "The Hostile Sun").

But the tree is even more than that: central to this work is the perception of a god in the tree, as in the sight of the "splendid growing of an ash-tree/alone, on a

hill-side in the north, humming in the wind ("Delight of Being Alone", CP, p. 610), or as in "What Are the Gods?", where the poet exclaims:

What are the gods, then, what are the gods?

The gods are nameless and imageless
yet looking in a great full lime-tree of summer
I suddenly saw deep into the eyes of god:
it is enough.

(CP, p. 650)

This is extremely relevant to the role of the visual element and its expression in Lawrence's later poems: his belief in the immanence of the gods stands in close relation to his sense of perception; the divine, for him, is essentially discovered and attained through this perception. The attribute "imageless" is not a contradiction, but stands for the mentally finished image, which man should not have of the gods (or of God); divinity must be apprehended in its changing, *dynamic* aspects, and is mainly *seen* by the poet in the reality of a natural concrete object.

In *Apocalypse* this god concept, surely one of the old natural religions, is attributed by Lawrence to the "ancient consciousness", to which

...Matter, Materia, or Substantial things are God.
A pool of water is god. And why not? The longer we
live the more we return to the oldest of all visions.
A great rock *is* god. I can touch it. It is undeniable.
It is god.¹⁰

The perceptuality of god is heightened when the object observed moves – and then it is twice godly, because we are doubly aware of its godhead, Lawrence claims. This intensi-

fying dynamic quality is highly relevant for the poetical presentation of the gods in *Pansies*, particularly in the poems describing godly glimpses in men, as I will show later in this chapter. The apperception of the gods, moreover, is momentary ("At the moment, whatever struck you was god.") and thus often adds to the dynamism of the verse.¹¹

Wonder (as "Desire is Dead" shows) is the condition for the apperception of the gods; it is, as Lawrence writes in "Hymns in a Man's Life", the "*natural* religious sense" in life.¹² It enables the sensuous apprehension of the world, revealing the gods, and is opposed to mental knowledge. Tom Marshall, quoting Ernst Cassirer, tells us of the Algonquin Indians, among whom it is customary:

"when they note anything unusual in men, women, birds, beasts or fish, to exclaim: *Manitu!* that is: 'This is a god!'. . . They are pure manifestations of wonder, or, to use Lawrence's earlier expression, "strange angels," gleaming impulses of life from within living beings. The poet in Lawrence may suddenly be struck by the god in the lime-tree of summer.¹³

In "Trees in the Garden", where among other trees we find again the lime-tree, there is a strong presence of the gods, though they are not directly referred to. They are in the colours (cf. "Notes", *CP*, p. 1032), in the shimmer and glow of an entirely perceptual tableau, the most striking quality of which is, as yet, its stillness. A stillness, however, which is given, as in "Autumn in Taos", in terms of the inherent energy (in visual interpretations, such as the lime-tree with its breath suspended, the elder hesitating, the grass glowing); and this dynamic

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harmony, enhanced by alliterations and symmetries, together with the accumulation of strong stresses ("grey-blue blueness", "leaves red-rosy", "green grass glows") is an unmistakable indication of the presence of divinity. But the stillness in the poem is not only immobility, it is also silence. Silence is, as will become increasingly apparent, a basic condition for the achievement of the Lawrencian perceptual act in his later poetry, and consequently, a predominant feature. Not only is silence felt to be soothing and healing by the sickening Lawrence (with "no grating of people with their presences gnawing/at the stillness of the air", cf. "Lonely, Lonesome, Loney-O!", CP, p. 646); silence, speechlessness and softness are also fundamental to the manifestation and expression of Lawrence's "Manitu". This is not surprising, as divinity is for the most part visually apprehended, as is the otherness of death in *Last Poems*; and silence allows, as in painting, a total concentration on colours, forms and motion. I quote the whole poem:

Ah in the thunder air
how still the trees are!

And the lime-tree, lovely and tall, every leaf silent
hardly looses even a last breath of perfume.

And the ghostly, creamy coloured little tree of
leaves
white, ivory white among the rambling greens
how evanescent, variegated elder, she hesitates on
the green grass
as if, in another moment, she would disappear
with all her grace of foam!

And the larch that is only a column, it goes up
too tall to see:

and the balsam-pines that are blue with the grey-
blue blueness of things from the sea,
and the young copper beech, its leaves red-rosy at
the ends
how still they are together, they stand so still
in the thunder air, all strangers to one another
as the green grass glows upwards, strangers in the
silent garden.

(CP, pp. 646-47)

Though the tree is perhaps the most recurrent, there are many other natural objects for Lawrence's "Manitu". The godliness of flowers either stands for itself or corresponds to that of another object, or to that the poet wishes other entities (mostly man) to possess. Animals, on the other hand, are almost always used as a contrasting element to the absence of the godly gleam in man.

The animal poems are usually short and proceed from observation to comparison and then to a conclusion which consists mostly of a single thought. Even the elephant series, which with its predominantly descriptive mode is an exception, finally sets the beasts with "æons of weariness round their eyes" against the "wispy, modern children" ("Two Performing Elephants, CP, p. 426), for whom the elephants' spectacle is too much, and "The Elephant is Slow to Mate" (CP, p. 465) contains a comparison which is *sousentendu* in "they do not snatch, they do not tear". Poems such as "The Gazelle Calf", "Little Fish", "The Mosquito Knows", "Self-Pity", "Many Mansions", "Lizard", "Peacock" and "The White Horse" consist of a single perception (Gilbert calls them "Imagistic doodles", p. 254),

a glimpse of the object, and mostly of an ensuing single thought about man. The thought is generally as concise and to the point as the image is clear-cut and self-contained; there is none of the detail, complexity of vision and multi-layered symbolism of the animal poems in *Birds*,

Beasts and Flowers:

The gazelle calf, O my children,
goes behind its mother across the desert,
goes behind its mother on blithe bare foot
requiring no shoes, O my children!

("The Gazelle Calf", *CP*, p. 466)

"Peacock" concentrates fully on the sense impression of colour and light, the thought included:

Think how a peacock in a forest of high trees
shimmers in a stream of blueness and long-
 tressed magnificence!
And women even cut their shimmery hair!

("Peacock", *CP*, p. 530)

In "Lizard" the thought, which comments upon looking itself, is a direct conclusion from observation, with a moralizing note which for once does not disturb; the perception is wittily interpreted in dynamic form, with a comic element of empathy.

A lizard ran out on a rock and looked up, listening
no doubt, to the sounding of the spheres.
And what a dandy fellow! the right toss of a chin
 for you
and swirl of a tail!

If men were as much men as lizards are lizards
they'd be worth looking at.

("Lizard", *CP*, p. 524)

If the poet is concerned, in these admittedly unspectacular and simple poems, with the fact that man is not like the animal observed, in the poems on flowers he expresses his wish for men to be like flowers (not as in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, where his main purpose was to show the nature and symbolic quality of the flower itself). There is the abstract-visual flower simile in the thought (on stillness) that

There is nothing to save, now all is lost,
but a tiny core of stillness in the heart
like the eye of a violet.

("Nothing to Save", *CP*, p. 658)

and the sense-impression of the actual "pomegranate which has red flowers outside the window", and the oleander "hot with perfume under the afternoon sun" ("We Die Together", *CP*, p. 629). Most of all, though, the flower is used metaphorically as a model for man. In "Gladness of Death" (*CP*, pp. 676 - 77) the poet wishes to identify himself with the flowers, "so unhampered in their living and dying" because of their naturalness. In "Climbing Down" (*CP*, p. 667) he tells men to "become aware as leaves are aware/and fine as flowers are fine", and in "Beautiful Old Age" (*CP*, p. 503) he describes how he wishes old people to be, in a silent and still visual simile:

Soothing, old people should be, like apples
when one is tired of love.
Fragrant like yellowing leaves, and dim with the soft
stillness and satisfaction of autumn.

(ll. 9-12)

In "Terra Incognita" (CP, pp. 666-67) the visual quality of the godliness of nature is more explicit, though perception is at first auditive and tactile. There is a "marvellous rich world of contact and sheer fluid beauty", gradually developing towards visuality and vision. There is something in this poem similar to what Lawrence found in a poem by Harry Crosby,

...a lovely suffusion in which the visual image passes at once into sense of touch, and back again, so that there is an iridescent confusion of sense-impression, sound and touch and sight all running into one another, blending into a vagueness which is a new world....¹⁴

In this world there is "fearless face-to-face awareness of now-naked life/and me, and you, and other men and women/and grapes, and ghouls, and ghosts and green moonlight/and ruddy orange limbs" (indicative of the godly gleam) and significantly "eyes so soft/softer than the space between the stars", i.e. eyes partaking of the perceptual wonder, as opposed to the mental eye. Finally, the last image is that of the fuchsia looked at with these eyes, which are essentially the poet's, and combined with empathy:

we can but touch, and wonder, and ponder, and make
our effort
and dangle in a last fastidious fine delight
as the fuchsia does, dangling her reckless drop
of purple after so much putting forth
and slow mounting marvel of a little tree.

(ll. 17-21)

The vision in this poem is again conveyed in the maturing style of the later poems, in the predominantly strongly stressed metre, highly alliterative and assonantical, with

internal rhymes and symmetries, displaying a formally conscious verse which has moved away considerably from prose.

In "Flowers and Men" (CP, pp. 683-84) the man-flower simile, moving in its imploring intensity, gives a clue to Lawrence's colour awareness (and symbolism); he addresses men and women: "Oh leave off saying I want you to be savages./Tell me, is the gentian savage, at the top of its coarse stem?/Oh, what in you can answer to this blueness?" Blue is the colour of the sea (as it appeared in the early poem "Blueness"), and carries with it the element of darkness and otherness, and it is also, finally, the colour of death (which is the last mystery of otherness life has to offer) and of godliness of the otherworld.

It is interesting to note that when Lawrence sees godliness in men he sometimes expresses this by using the same attributes for the men as he did for some flowers in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*. In the poem "As thyself!" (CP, p. 645) for instance a neighbour seen in a "moment of pure manifestation" is characterized as "silent, a little wondering/with his ears pricked", reminiscent of the cyclamen. An additional reason why divinity is seen in flowers and trees is thus certainly the fact that they are essentially "silent".

If we look into the poems in which Lawrence actually sees glimpses of the gods in men and compare them to those on "godless" men, it becomes apparent how sharp the dichotomy

is. The numbers of these poems - there are little more than half a dozen on man with the godly gleam (including "Be it So", "Man is More", "Two Ways of Living and Dying" and the poems discussed below) as against the bulk of the others - also reveal how lop-sided the comparison is. Perception again plays a crucial part, for all men and women who have the gleam of the gods are looked at like the lime-tree (the perception of man in his godliness is basically the vision of the poet, Gilbert suggests, p. 200 ff.), whereas the man who "is not quite man" ("Man is More than *Homo Sapiens*", CP, p. 674) of the negative Pansies is hardly ever apprehended with the senses, nor is he individual or actual, but always considered in general terms of civilization. He is as grey as the machine is, grey being essentially the not-colour, and symbolic of real death, as expressed in "Future States" (CP, p. 611), where the opposite to grey industrial civilization is described as "many vivid small states, like a kaleidoscope, all colours/ and all the differences given expression".

The primal relevance of perceptual apprehension is evident in the poems on the divine glimpses of man, and it is interesting, in this connection, to take into consideration Lawrence's frequent comments in *Pansies* on the nature of seeing. True seeing, which discovers *appley-ness* and "Manitu", and includes the mystery behind and beyond, cannot be achieved by self-conscious and self-absorbed people (cf. "True Love at Last", CP, p. 605). Again we find Lawrence's belief, first stated in *Look!*,

in the necessity of obliterating one's ego to attain fulfillment, which now means one's own godliness. Ego-bound man has "unclean eyes" ("Shows", *CP*, p. 634), spoiling even flowers with his "mental-visual consciousness" of the tourist, possessive and planned, where "everything has been seen to death" ("Tourists", *CP*, p. 660). It is this kind of seeing Lawrence is thinking of when he expresses the wish for "darkness and ceasing to see" ("The Hills, *CP*, p. 660), for "not looking" and "not-seeing", which leads to the vision of the "undeniable new gods" ("Travel is Over", *CP*, p. 662) and to the darkness of *Last Poems*. On the other hand, when the poet tells us of the "stone-blind ones" ("The Half-Blind", *CP*, p. 665), he is still referring to "mental-visual consciousness" and contrasting it with those who see the gleam of the gods and the "light of life". In one group of poems Lawrence expounds his belief that there are a few men who are seers: "Some men can see life clear and flickering all around,/and some can only see what they are shown./Some men look straight into the eyes of the gods/and some can see no gods, they only know/the gods are there because of the gleam on the faces of the men who see" ("Worship", *CP*, p. 649). One of the men who see is, obviously and implicitly, the poet. (The leadership ideas of *The Plumed Serpent* inherent in these poems, relating to the artist-leader who stands in direct contact with divinity and must be obeyed and served, are obvious.) The poem "Sunset" insistently echoes the poet's belief of being in the company of a god, in highly perceptual

terms and with a transparency which goes along with
divinity:

There is a band of dull gold in the west, and say what
you like
again and again some god of evening leans out of it
and shares being with me, silkily
all of twilight.

(CP, p. 656)

If we are tempted to take Lawrence's comments on visual perception too metaphorically, we are soon set right: in "All Sorts of Gods" (CP, p. 671) the poet says of the gods that "...you see them all if you look", and "you see them in glimpses, in the faces and forms of people". In "Name the Gods" (CP, p. 651) he explains in the Old Testament tradition that the gods cannot be represented as themselves, but only as an immanent phenomenon, in natural objects and their gleam. In the last stanza the divine vision, twice godly by motion, is rendered in beautifully perceptual terms, expressive of the divinity of the "material-dynamic world".¹⁵

But all the time I see the gods:
the man who is mowing the tall white corn,
suddenly, as it curves, as it yields, the white wheat
and sinks down with a swift rustle, and a strange,
falling flatness,
ah! the gods, the swaying body of god!
ah the fallen stillness of god, autumnus, and it is
only July
the pale-gold flesh of Priapus dropping asleep.

(ll. 5-11)

The kinetic flow of these lines is perfect: the staccato of line three, reflecting the wavering of the corn before

the fall; the assonantical sibilant fluency of line four, as the wheat sinks and falls; and the broadening and softening of the verse to the stillness of the last lines. The absence of the principal verb and recurrent use of present participles (a device noted in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*) conveys a sense of immediacy and dynamism. The glimpse of the gods is indeed momentary and ephemeral, and the frequent breathless quality of such lines reflects not only the dynamism inherent in the divine manifestation, but also the poet's wish and need to capture the evanescent appearance of the gods. The dynamism is thus inherent in the action on both the descriptive and the creative level.

"For a Moment", one of the most successful expressions of the poet's apprehension of godly glimpses in men, has a clear four-stanza structure. I quote the whole poem:

For a moment, at evening, tired, as he stepped off the
tram-car,
—the young tram-conductor in a blue uniform, to himself
forgotten,—
and lifted his face up, with blue eyes looking at the
electric rod which he was going to turn round,
for a moment, pure in the yellow evening light, he was
Hyacinthus.

In the green garden darkened the shadow of coming rain
and a girl ran swiftly, laughing breathless, taking in
her white washing
in rapid armfuls from the line, tossing it in the basket,
and so rapidly, and so flashing, fleeing before the rain
for a moment she was Io, Io, who fled from Zeus, or the
Danaë.

When I was waiting and not thinking, sitting at a table
on the hotel terrace
I saw suddenly coming towards me, lit up and uplifted
with pleasure
advancing with the slow-swiftness of a ship backing her
white sails into port

the woman who looks for me in the world
and for the moment she was Isis, gleaming, having found
her Osiris.

For a moment, as he looked at me through his spectacles
pondering, yet eager, the broad and thick-set Italian
who works in with me,
for a moment he was the Centaur, the wise yet horse-
hoofed Centaur
in whom I can trust.

(CP, p. 672)

The second stanza is a particularly excellent example of dynamic form: the speed of the action described is transferred to the form in a masterly way, again with the use of the present participles, alliterations and run-on lines; the metrical patterns are highly symmetrical, expressive of the urgency, and the repetition of Io's name sounds like an agitated call prompted by the knowledge that the moment is passing. Each of the four stanzas of the parallel-structured poem contains a vision — Imagist in its concentration and intensity — of a man or a woman in his or her "moment of pure manifestation", when they are "not thinking,/when they are pure, which means when they are quite clear from self-consciousness/either in anger or tenderness, or desire or sadness or wonder or mere stillness" ("All Sorts of Gods", CP, p. 672). And it is not only the person watched, but also the poet who, to perceive these glimpses, has to be purely himself, in wonder, unthinking. Much of the beauty of this poem lies in the delicate magic reality is endowed with by the visions of divinity combined with observational truth.

A poem which I consider to be one of the most beautiful

of *Pansies* is "Andraitx—Pomegranate Flowers" (again there is the intended magic of the foreign word – in this case a place name). It fuses nature and men into a unity and harmony which is extremely rare for this period, and the redness of the godly gleam as well as the darkening perception links it closely to *Last Poems*. The poem is not only intensely visual, a flickering, moving picture, with the inherent energy in the otherwise still scene almost entirely expressed in terms of colours; it is also – and its highly visual-visionary quality stands in close correlation to this – one of Lawrence's most perfectly "silent" poems. I quote the whole poem:

It is June, it is June
the pomegranates are in flower,
the peasants are bending cutting the bearded wheat.

The pomegranates are in flower
beside the high-road, past the deathly dust,
and even the sea is silent in the sun.

Short gasps of flame in the green of night, way off
the pomegranates are in flower,
small sharp red fires in the night of leaves.

And noon is suddenly dark, is lustrous, is silent and
dark
men are unseen, beneath the shading hats;
only, from out the foliage of the secret loins
red flamelets here and there reveal
a man, a woman there.

(CP, pp. 605-6)

The highly symmetrical syntactic and metrical structure stands in cogent relation to the inherent thematic harmony. The literal repetition in the first line prefigures the repetitions in lines two, four, and eight. The last lines

of stanzas one and two are metrically almost identical: x / x x / x / x (x) / x /; both describe an item of the scene (visual and kinetic, visual and auditive) and both are -- one even highly -- alliterative; the other two lines (one and five) are symmetrical in themselves, with a caesura in the middle, indicating time and place. In stanza three, the first and third line (excluding "way off" which is an introduction to the last of the three literal repetitions) both express exactly the same visual phenomenon in different words (an excellent example of Lawrence's slight variation: "short gasps of flame/small sharp red fires", "in the green of night/in the night of leaves"), and both have a completely identical metrical form. In stanza four the parallel stress pattern of "is suddenly dark/is silent and dark" in the first line, with the insertion "is lustrous", marks the modified repetition technique, entailing deepening vision, and this is reflected in the second and fourth line. In fact, it is in the last stanza that the red flames, which first were the blooming pomegranates, are identified with the men and women in the scene. As perception darkens, unity is achieved. The rhythm of the last line, finally, aptly reflects the momentary quality of the visual impression. Obviously, the structure of this poem is very carefully built up, and embodies, on the formal level, its theme of the correspondence of nature and man.

NOTES

¹Virginia Woolf, "Notes on D.H.Lawrence", in *The Moment and Other Essays*, p. 36.

²W.H.Auden, *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays*, pp. 294-95.

³R.G.N.Salgado, "The Poetry of D.H.Lawrence", p. 197.

⁴Harry T.Moore, *The Life and Works of D.H.Lawrence*, p. 238.

⁵D.H.Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, p. 45.

⁶D.H.Lawrence, *Phoenix II*, p. 605.

⁷D.H.Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, p. 106.

⁸The concept of light and dark which is so predominant in Lawrence's thought may have been an effect of the visual impact of Italy, as his book *Twilight in Italy* indicates (see also note 1 to Chapter III).

⁹Kenneth Inniss, *D.H.Lawrence's Bestiary*, p. 92.

¹⁰D.H.Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, p. 84.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹²D.H.Lawrence, *Phoenix II*, p. 599.

¹³Tom Marshall, *The Psychic Mariner*, p. 187.

¹⁴D.H.Lawrence, *Phoenix*, p. 260.

¹⁵See *Studies in Classic American Literature*, p. 119.

CHAPTER V

LAST POEMS: THE VISIONARY WORLD BEYOND

Though there are quite a number of minor abstract and expository Pansy-like poems in this volume dealing with themes such as "mentality", self-centredness and evil, Lawrence's main concern in *Last Poems* is with death. There are meditations on oblivion and silence, and a darkening — yet no weakening — of visual perception. The reader will, in fact, find a surprisingly high degree of "sense-awareness" where under the circumstances he would expect reflective introspection and speculative or abstract ruminations. Most poets, when confronted with death, produce argumentative, spiritual and frequently painful verse. Lawrence's *Last Poems*, however, are intensely sensory and sensuous, peaceful and confident, expressing his belief in the supremacy of the physical world more insistently than ever, and accepting and celebrating death as part of the whole natural cycle of the Greater Life.

In *Apocalypse* Lawrence attributes this glorification of the perceptual world of the senses inherent in *Last Poems* to the pre-Hellenic Aegean civilization:

We have lost almost entirely the great and intricately developed sensual awareness, or sense-awareness, and sense-knowledge, of the ancients. It was a great depth of knowledge arrived at direct, by instinct and intuition, as we say, not by reason. It was a knowledge based not on words but on images. The abstraction was not into generalisations or into qualities, but into

symbols. And the connection was not logical but emotional. The word "therefore" did not exist. Images or symbols succeeded one another in a procession of instinctive and arbitrary connection — some of the Psalms give us examples — and they "get nowhere" because there was nowhere to get to, the desire was to achieve a consummation of a certain state of feeling-awareness.¹

There is also a marked change of style in the volume: as Lawrence proceeds from the glimpses of the gods to an essentially religious preoccupation with God, towards the apprehension of death as the ultimate mystery of otherness, his verses gain in sonority and clarity and the rhythm broadens.

This last proclamation of the perceptual world, together with the formal achievement of the mature poet and the Lawrencian directness and surrender to emotional and experiential truth, thus generated some poems on death which are among the most moving and successful of this century. This success confirms, finally, my own contention of the growth of Lawrence's poetical power as a result of his evolving perceptual skills. Keith Alldritt comes to the same conclusion with respect to the novels: "A very important part of Lawrence's maturing as a writer is the development of his ability to make his unusual powers of perception focus upon a wider area of reality."² However, he excludes the last novels, which on the whole display a general absence of visual imagination, and are often marred by authorial assertion and insistence, as is the case in the bad poems of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* and in most of the *Pansies*.

There is a group of poems formulating, more clearly than ever, Lawrence's ideas on sensory perception and the physical world and its relevance to artistic creation, and there is another group putting these ideas into practice.

Most of the poems of the first - theoretical - group expound the poet's thoughts on physicality and the senses in terms of the divine creation. I must confess that their interest for me lies mainly in their message and less in their poetical quality.

The central theme of "Demiurge" (CP, p. 689) is the supremacy of the corporeal element, and the dependence of thought or idea on it. Imagination, God's as well as the poet's, is essentially sensory, and never abstract. What more can the mind of the poet do, if

Even the mind of God can only imagine
those things that have become themselves:
bodies and presences, here and now, creatures with
a foothold in creation
even if it is only a lobster on tip-toe.

(ll. 8-11)

In "Bodiless God" the logical consequence of this belief in the physicality of all beings leads to the conclusion that even God must have a body, and in "The Body of God" (CP, p. 691) the poet describes the nature of God's phenomenal appearances as "the great urge that has not yet found a body/but urges towards incarnation with the great creative urge./And becomes at last a clove carnation". God's basically physical manifestation is thus finally

attested in all clarity:

There is no god
apart from poppies and the flying fish,
men singing songs, and women brushing their hair
in the sun.

(11. 7-9)

The key word is "apart", meaning both "except" and "separate"; God is thus never transcendent, even when he is "the undiscoverable", the indescribable of "Maximus" and the one and eternal of "The Man of Tyre"; he is always inevitably linked, even in his becoming, to the physical element. In *Studies* Lawrence writes:

When we study the pagan gods, we find they have now one meaning, now another. Now they belong to the creative essence, and now to the material-dynamic world. First they have one aspect, then another. The greatest god has both aspects. First he is the source of life. Then he is mystic dynamic lord of the elemental physical forces.³

God is not only immanent or pantheistic, appearing in the product of his creation; he is the dynamic process towards creation, too.⁴ The necessary condition for creation, paradoxical as it may seem, is thus the presence of something materially created which can be apprehended. Being and becoming are ultimately one, and interdependent. Consequently, there is nothing preconceived in true creation, God "knows nothing before-hand"; creation is spontaneous, and results directly from the confrontation and contact with matter. The artist's situation is essentially identical with God's. Lawrence writes in "The Work of Creation" (*CP*, p. 690):

Even an artist knows that his work was never in his
mind,
he could never have *thought* it before it happened.
A strange ache possessed him, and he entered the
struggle,
and out of the struggle with his material, in the
spell of the urge
his work took place, it came to pass, it stood up
and saluted his mind.

(11. 3-7)

This alleged spontaneity of the creative act is closely
linked to the conception of the poetry of the moment of
Look! We Have Come Through!, and also to the ephemeral
character of *Pansies*, if we consider the pun – whether
intended or not – "come to pass". The unpremeditated act
of creation is mysterious and wonderful, and even God
looks on in wonder.

"Red Geranium and Godly Mignonette" (CP, pp. 690-91)
is perhaps the most explicit of these poems. "We know that
even God could not imagine the redness of a red geranium/
nor the smell of mignonette" when these were not, the
poet exclaims, and the concreteness is almost strained in
this celebration of sensory perception: "even God would
have to have a nose/to smell at the mignonette" the poet
humorously points out. Finally, he imagines God trying to
create, in the abstract and in a premeditated act, and the
attempt is ridiculed:

"Now there shall be tum-tiddly-um, and tum-tiddly-um,
hey-presto! scarlet geranium!"

(11. 14-15)

Of course this is, implicitly, a parody on the thought-out

creative act of the poet, relying on the abstract mind instead of on senses and on perception, and on the kind of poetry this produces, with a mechanical metre and meaningless words, chosen for the sake of a dead form.

It is in a short poem that the indispensable inter-relation of life, sensory faculties and poetry is expressed most directly and basically:

To our senses, the elements are four
and have ever been, and will ever be
for they are the elements of life, of poetry, and
of perception,
the four Great Ones, the Four Roots, the First Four
of Fire and the Wet, Earth and the wide Air of the
world.

("The Four", *CP*, p. 706, ll. 1-5)

To find or describe anything other than these basic elements, of which our perceptual world is made, requires a mental effort, and is the task of science rather than of art.

It is thus to be expected that we shall find many perceptual elements in the *Last Poems*, particularly if the theme stands in relation to a form of Lawrencian divinity (which in many poems it does). This is already evident in the first sequence of four beautiful poems on the poet's vision of the return of the Greek and Minoan gods. Likewise apparent, and relevant to the style of the rest of the major last poems, is the gradual change of tempo in this group: as the poet proceeds on his visionary

journey towards the other and the divine, the momentary quality of his godly apprehensions slowly gives way to a more assured, stable and lasting vision, which is less dependent on actuality than in *Pansies*; Lawrence's gods are now either located in the past, in the sea or in some kind of personal dark world. Gradually, breathlessness leaves the verse, and a peaceful, at times majestic kind of motion or dynamism (corresponding to the "Kosmodynamos") is introduced. We have encountered precursors of this rhythm in some predominantly strongly-stressed *Pansies*.

In "The Greeks are Coming!" (*CP*, p. 687), the first poem in the volume, with an extremely marked and highly organic dynamic form, the vision of those Aegeans from *Apocalypse* who thought in images is still sudden, with run-on lines, internal rhymes and alliterative sibilants enhancing speed:

Little islands out at sea, on the horizon
keep suddenly showing a whiteness, a flash and a
furl, a hail
of something coming, ships a-sail from over the
rim of the sea.

By way of agitated, exclamatory repetitions the poet is trying to convince himself of what he believes he is seeing, and to retain the vision:

And every time, it is ships, it is ships,
it is ships of Cnossos coming, out of the morning
end of the sea,
it is Aegean ships, and men with archaic pointed
beards
coming out of the eastern end.

Yet as the poet realizes that he has been seeing a fata morgana, as it were, as vision cannot be sustained and reality floods back into his outer eye, the flow of the verse comes to a full stop, and the ensuing strong-stress slowness, length of vowels and falling metre stand in sharp contrast to the dactylic speed of the two preceding stanzas. (The synaesthesia of sight and smell indicates the concreteness of the last perception.)

But it is far-off foam.
And an ocean liner, going east, like a small beetle
 walking the edge
is leaving a long thread of dark smoke
like a bad smell.

When vision, as here, still relies mainly on the reality of the actual world, the necessary inclusion of the temporal element often lends the verse its urgency.

In the next poem "The Argonauts" (CP, p. 687) the tempo slackens as the poet's confidence in his vision grows. Twice we have "slowly", the pausing of the moon is reflected in repeated caesuras, and there is the solemn, eternal cosmic frame of sun and moon. Though the poet has not yet seen anything on the face of the sea, he *knows* he will, and will not let himself be disturbed by everyday prosaic realities as in the former poem: "wait, wait, don't bring me the coffee yet, nor the *pain grillé*." "Odysseus' ships/have not yet passed the islands," the poet writes, and "I must watch them still" expresses the effort of concentration on his vision of the divine which most undoubtedly will come.

The growing irrelevance of the realistic-descriptive world in these poems is conspicuous. In "Making Pictures" Lawrence describes the independence of the artist from actuality:

The picture must all come out of the artist's inside, awareness of forms and figures. We can call it memory, but it is more than memory. It is the image as it lives in the consciousness, alive like a vision, but unknown.⁵

In "Middle of the World" (CP, p. 688) the first stanza is an actual credo, where the sea, in a Thalesian concept, is the bearer of all that is divine and other, and thus essentially alive and dynamic; it stands for death only as a part of life in its blueness, for change with its tides; it is the world of the past gods and their intimations of distilled otherness and of the Etruscan joy in physical life. It is notable how the image of the leaping dolphins is added at the end as an encadrement, as it were, of the picture evoked, just as we find it in Etruscan wall-paintings, which obviously inspired the poet.

This sea will never die, neither will it ever grow
old
nor cease to be blue, nor in the dawn
cease to lift up its hills
and let the slim black ship of Dionysos come sailing
in
with grape-vines up the mast, and dolphins leaping.

(ll. 1-5)

The poem is almost entirely perceptual, except for the second stanza, which Lawrence would have done better to leave out, pedestrian ("the P. & O. and the Orient Line...") and polemic ("...and all the other stinkers") as it is.

The cosmic frame of the third stanza and the metrical symmetries work to underline the harmony of the early Minoan world, and at the same time shed that particular quality of light, the godly glitter, on the scene that follows, a scene unforgettable in its delicate magic. The poet here creates, as in the poems discussed below, these "images of magic awareness which we call art".⁶ He combines images from various cultures to create his own mythology of the otherworld, and the plasticity of the scene is heightened by their associative power.

And now that the moon who gives men glistening bodies
is in her exaltation, and can look down on the sun
I see descending from the ships at dawn
slim naked men from Cnossos, smiling the archaic smile
of those that will without fail come back again,
and kindling little fires upon the shores
and crouching, and speaking the music of lost languages.

And the Minoan Gods, and the Gods of Tiryns
are heard softly laughing and chatting, as ever;
and Dionysos, young and a stranger
leans listening on the gate, in all respect.

(11. 10-20)

The last stanza combines visual and auditive elements, which is frequent in these poems. In "For the Heroes are Dipped in Scarlet" (*CP*, pp. 688-89) we read: "They had long hair, like Samson,/and clean as arrows they sped at the mark/when the bow-cord twanged." Laughter, in both poems, is the central auditive element, indicating delight that can only be god-given (like the joy of the sea animals in the next poems discussed), and expressing the careless, unreflected and spontaneous affirmation of life. In "Silence" (*CP*, pp. 698-99) the significance of laughter is

made clear: it is essentially God who laughs his laugh of creation, which is the sound of "holy Silence". Here the laugh is "thundrous", as it is "shattering" in "For the Heroes are Dipped in Scarlet". "Huge, huge roll the peals of the thundrous laugh" the poet exclaims in a markedly rhythmical passage, with a metrical pattern very much like that expressive of the whales' life-joy, though too literally repetitive.

In stanzas four and five of "For the Heroes are Dipped in Scarlet" the poet bids the reader listen ("Hark!/Hark!") and look ("Lo!"); and indeed, not only does he present him with visual and auditive elements on the substance level, but also in the form, in lines which must be read and listened to. The sound of the soft but intense laughter is reflected in the onomatopoeic "shattering laughter", the "slim waists of warriors" (like those of the Taos Indians in "Mornings in Mexico") finds the kinaesthetic expression of its meaning in the elastic [uə] alliterations. Finally, in the last stanza, the pattern of the dance, which is essentially a movement upon itself, is mirrored in the syntactic structure of "They are dancing! they return, as they went, dancing!". But the form is more than imitative of the substance. The metrical pattern describing the dance

x x / x x x / x x / / x

is basic to all central visual elements in the poem and appears in several variations and extensions:

and their faces scarlet	x x / x	/ x
like the dolphin's blood	x x / x	/
is red all over	x / x	/ x
as he ripples upwards	x x / x	/ x
as of god, vermilion	x x /	x / x

The variants and inversions thus embody, on the formal level, the theme of godly laughter and life-joy, of which the dance and the scarlet gleam (associated with the happy dolphins' blood) are expressions.

There are two poems in which the dolphins and the whales (interchangeable in the Lawrencian manner) are celebrated as the divine, joyful, pure life-element of the sea, and both have a marked rhythmical quality. "They Say the Sea is Loveless" (CP, p. 693) is a short, unpretentious poem, yet it carefully translates the observed motion it describes unto its form:

But from the sea
 the dolphins leap round Dionysos' ship
 whose masts have purple vines,
 and up they come with a purple dark of rainbows
 and flip! they go! with the nose-dive of sheer delight;
 and the sea is making love to Dionysos
 in the bouncing of these small and happy whales.

(11. 4-10)

The leaping of the dolphins is rendered in masterly fashion: the paralleling of "and up they come/and flip! they go!" displays a subtle differentiation of the movement reflected in the form; swiftness and suddenness are enhanced in the second phrase by means of punctuation and the

semantic and phonetic impact of "flip". The two lines (seven and eight) bear striking affinities to the traditional distich, not only reflecting the smoothness and compactness of the action, but also its nature and direction by the rising and falling metre. Added to the movement is a visual ("purple") and empathic ("delight") element, both indicating divinity.

In "Whales Weep Not!" (CP, pp. 694-95) we find the technique of setting image after image, reflecting the thought-pattern of the "ancient consciousness" of the pagans, to whom, as we saw in *Pansies*, only concrete things were God, and those that moved and lived doubly so. It is not surprising, therefore, that the whales acquire that divine nature in the poem. The symbolic quality of these "blood beings" who are called "arch-angels of bliss", implicative of their godly *joie de vivre*, whose self-contained mid-ocean otherness is mirrored in their "strange whale eyes", and who are set in a monumental scene, finds its consummate formal expression. The poem is the most perfect example of the highly strongly-stressed metrical pattern, of the clustering of monosyllabic feet indicating divinity. The accordingly heavy rolling of the rhythm, with integrated syntactic parallelisms, inversions, repetitions and alliterations, corresponds to the ponderous majesty and wave-life harmony of the theme, which is the godliness of the phallic beasts and the correspondence between whale blood and ocean waters of "the beginning and the end". I quote the third stanza, where the perfect formal

realization of the motion described is apparent, containing biblical and echoic words evocative of the divine-dynamic quality implied.

And they rock, and they rock, through the sensual
ageless ages
on the depths of the seven seas,
and through the salt they reel with drunk delight
and in the tropics tremble they with love
and roll with massive, strong desire, like gods.
Then the great bull lies up against his bride
in the blue deep bed of the sea,
as mountain pressing on mountain, in the zest of life:
and out of the inward roaring of the inner red ocean
of whale-blood
the long tip reaches strong, intense, like the maelstrom-
tip, and comes to rest
in the clasp and the soft, wild clutch of a she-whale's
fathomless body.

(11. 7-17)

This is obviously formally the absolute counterpart of the irregularity and looseness of Lawrence's abstract verse, and almost extreme as an illustration of the tendency of his style in *Last Poems*.

Out of the sea come the Minoan and Greek gods, and in it live the whale-dolphins, and always the sea is not just a symbol, "mid-ocean" and "ageless", but also highly perceptual, "blue" and "foamy". It is out of the sea, too, that the woman-goddess comes in "The Man of Tyre", a poem almost entirely perceptual and with a central visual message (Gilbert speaks of "joyously sensual Mediterranean images", p. 278), which is essentially a vision. The technique by which the images in this scene succeed each other is that of the pagan "image-thinker", who, according to Lawrence, "was necessarily a poet", "who starts with an

image, sets the image in motion, allows it to achieve a certain course or circuit of its own, and then takes up another image." These images are like those of the old Greeks, "wonderfully natural and harmonious", following the "logic of action rather than of reason."⁷

The vision is clearly set off, formally and thematically, by a frame consisting of the first and last stanza; it is an item of motion-scene carefully transcribed into an auditive-dynamic form, as iambic patterned repetitions echo and describe the step-by-step approach of the woman. The preceding second stanza is a long preparative observational introduction, ousting process by stasis in its pluperfect form and its anaphoric enumeration of antecedents.

The man of Tyre went down to the sea
pondering, for he was Greek, that God is one and all
alone and ever more shall be so.

And a woman who had been washing clothes in the pool
of rock
where a stream came down to the gravel of the sea
and sank in,
who had spread white washing on the gravel banked
above the bay,
who had lain her shift on the shore, on the shingle
slope,
who had waded to the pale green sea of evening, out
to a shoal,
pouring sea-water over herself
now turned, and came slowly back, with her back to
the evening sky.

Oh lovely, lovely with the dark hair piled up, as
she went deeper, deeper down the channel, then
rose shallower, shallower,
with the full thighs slowly lifting of the wader wading
shorewards
and the shoulders pallid with light from the silent
sky behind
both breasts dim and mysterious, with the glamorous
kindness of twilight between them

and the dim blotch of black maidenhair like an indicator,
giving a message to the man—

So in the cane-brake he clasped his hands in delight
that could only be god-given, and murmured:
Lo! God is one god! But here in the twilight
godly and lovely comes Aphrodite out of the sea
towards me!

(CP, pp. 692-93)

At the focal point of vision in the third stanza there is a quiet but firmly insistent pressure through repetition and syntactic structure which relaxes as the woman comes nearer. Correspondingly, the attention of the observer turns from motion ("went", "rose", "lifting", "wading") to form and colour, and to the interplay of light and dark indicative of godliness. Divinity is suggested, too, by the semantic impact of "silent sky". Silence, in the poem of the same name, is defined as coming from God and called the "great bride of all creation"; it is fundamental to the moment of transition, of death, the "silence of passing through doors", the "great hush of going from this into that", and has an almost physical property that "screens us purely" ("Silence", CP, pp. 698-99). Thus silence accompanies the moment of godly perception as well as that of oblivion and transition to the "other" state, which is, essentially, one and the same experience of divine otherness.

Oblivion, the moment of pure silence, the "absolute, utter forgetting/and a ceasing to know, a perfect ceasing to know/and a silent, sheer cessation of all awareness"

("The End, the Beginning", *CP*, p. 724; cf. also "Tabernacle" and "Temples", *CP*, p. 726), is accompanied by a darkening of the poet's perception. Sleep, which comprises all three elements of silence, darkness and oblivion, is the traditional metaphor used in several poems. In "Song of Death" (*CP*, pp. 723-24), a poem considered to have served as a draft for "The Ship of Death", which relates these elements, the property of darkness emerges.

Sing then the song of death, and the longest journey
and what the soul takes with him, and what he leaves
 behind,
and how he enters fold after fold of deepening darkness
for the cosmos even in death is like a dark whorled
 shell
whose whorls fold round to the core of soundless silence
 and pivotal oblivion
where the soul comes at last, and has utter peace.

(ll. 4-9)

As silence is intensified, formally and semantically, by alliterative tautology ("soundless silence") and oblivion by the mirror symmetry of vowels ("pivotal oblivion"), the journey into deepening darkness is expressed, in its step-wise motion, by means of repetition, alliteration and predominantly dactylic and trochaic metre. Thus the organic form as well as the diction used to describe darkness define it as an element which is, in spite of its actually entailing a loss of visibility, highly perceptual. In this perceptuality of darkness I see an expression, as it were, of the perceptuality of symbol and vision marking Lawrence's later poetry, which is likewise not longer dependent on

descriptive-concrete actuality. It is not surprising, therefore, that silence and darkness, intensely sensory except for "first ear" and "first sight" (as opposed to second sight), are attributed life-restoring qualities: "...if you want to breathe deep, sumptuous life/breathe all alone, in silence, in the dark,/and see nothing." ("The Breath of Life", *CP*, p. 698). The perceptuality of darkness is of a complex nature: "fold after fold", "softness of deep shadows folding" ("Shadows", *CP*, p. 727), or "the upper darkness is heavy on the lower" ("The Ship of Death", *CP*, p. 719) indicate, by their imagery, the physical, tangible character (parallel to that of silence) that darkness possesses. Yet there is more than the mere materialization of darkness for lack of visual perception; paradoxically, darkness develops its own visionary - blue - light which is intensified as it deepens and has its own physical laws. (It is interesting in this connection to return to an early poem, "Blueness" (*CP*, p. 136), where almost all the central elements we find in *Last Poems* are already united and related: there is the sea, darkness (which is as watery as frequently in the later poems), the colour blue, the leaping dolphins and "the flame of the shadow".) In "Lucifer" (*CP*, p. 697) the brightness of the fallen angel is transformed, in the "dark-blue depths" of darkness, into something like the gleam of a ruby. This light in darkness Lawrence usually calls "gloom", which has - if not etymological - in any case acoustic associations with "gleam", "loom" and "gloaming". Expressions like

"soft, strange gloom/pervades my movements and my thoughts and words" ("Shadows", *CP*, 727) are faintly evocative of a semi-material black-light energy.

"Bavarian Gentians" (*CP*, p. 697) is the most prominent and successful poem embodying this multi-perceptual darkness. The gentian, laconically placed as an objective correlative by the mention of it in its actuality in the first two lines, is used in the following as a mediating symbol, and has a function basically similar to that of the ship in "The Ship of Death", that of carrying the poet from one world to the other. Once again, the poet's imagination is thus triggered by the direct sensory apprehension of the flower and its blueness, with its blending of luminosity and darkness. In fact the poem is, as a critic puts it, "a splash of colour, like a Picasso canvas done in his 'blue' period".⁸ It may seem prosaic to note that the words *dark* and *darkness* appear eighteen times in this poem, not counting *blue*, *blueness* and *gloom* (which are frequent, too); yet it is of immediate interest with regard to the nature of perception. I found a similar technique in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, where each repetition brought a deepening and broadening of perception and, with it, of meaning. The same happens here: as the poet widens his consciousness to include the realms of the underworld and death, perception is also deepened and altered by the integration and addition of a non-actual yet visionary recording of light and colour. Transition of consciousness is accompanied by the transformation of

perception. As the poet descends down the stairs to the underworld, the gentian, which initially darkened the daytime, turns into a torch, illuminating the darkness; finally, in an otherworld where natural laws are reversed, the gentian *sheds* darkness on the surrounding darkness instead of light, or, in other words, darkness acts like light and contains, basically, light and colour.

The more complex and magic, the less concrete the gentian becomes (as darkness deepens), turning at last into something like black light energy, the more physical the darkness grows, with even an awareness of its own. The real object taken from this world is transformed as it passes into the otherworld and helps to apprehend the latter in its otherness. I quote the second half of the poem, where the journey begins:

Reach me a gentian, give me a torch!
let me guide myself with the blue, forked torch of this
flower
down the darker and darker stairs, where blue is darkened
on blueness
even where Persephone goes, just now, from the frosted
September
to the sightless realm where darkness is awake upon
the dark
and Persephone herself is but a voice
or a darkness invisible enfolded in the deeper dark
of the arms Plutonic, and pierced with the passion of
dense gloom,
among the splendour of torches of darkness, shedding
darkness on the lost bride and her groom.

(ll. 11-19)

The first line quoted enhances, with its parallel syntactic and metrical structure and the absence of the last unaccented syllable at the end (/ x x / x / x x /),

the insistent, imperative character of the summons. The flow of the following lines, achieved by means of strongly-stressed regular metre and enjambement, is expressive of the relentless descent to the otherworld and evokes, together with the echoic repetitions and alliterations, both the sense of ritual incantation and of step-by-step motion ("like footfalls retreating into the bowels of the earth", a critic puts it).⁹ This is again the onomatopoeic dynamism encountered in many directly perceptual passages describing motion. This motion comes to a stop, not so much through the caesura of the last two lines as through the powerful last and only full end rhyme, implying finality and death.

As the famous — though atypical — poem "The Ship of Death" (*CP*, pp. 716-21) has been widely and efficiently discussed there is no need for me to expatiate any further on its meaning and complex symbolism. Though I find it hard not to be sceptical about its extremely loose, heterogeneous structure (apparent in spite of, or possibly just because of, its thematic and symbolic coherence), I admit that the poem derives much of its force and impact from its confident and transfigured tone, as well as from the unconditional surrender of a man confronted with death — though the subdued quiescence is disturbingly un-Lawrencian. What is interesting for the purpose of this study is the poem's combination of perceptual and argumentative matter, comprising a number of elements discussed above, and their formal accordance. It starts off with a sonority which also pervades the discursive passages. Whereas a correspondence

is established in the first two sections between natural objects and the self, sensory impression and thought being mingled with interim exhortations addressed to the reader, sections III and IV are highly argumentative and less convincing, to my mind, for their second-hand literariness, which is out of key with the personal directness of the rest of the poem. In sections V and VI there is an internalization of the ocean (as the flood invades body and soul), an ocean which, however, will even "rise on the outside world", establishing the hermetic correspondence; and the dark waters are implicitly the materialization of the darkness of oblivion. Again dying is a piecemeal process, which is rendered in anaphoric repetitions, like the step-wise descent in "Bavarian Gentians" or the stage-by-stage revelation of the full vision of otherness in "The Man of Tyre" and in the poems of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*. From section VII to the end, describing the journey to the otherworld as actual motion (sailing), the approach becomes increasingly perceptual, starting off with the reassuringly homely concreteness and the still-life descriptions of objects of this world to be taken aboard. The ship, by the way, representing the central perceptual - concretized - element in the poem, is traced, like the dolphins, after the paintings Lawrence had seen in Etruscan tombs. The difficult moment of transition is expressed exclusively in visual terms:

There is no port, there is nowhere to go
only the deepening black darkening still

blackier upon the soundless, ungurgling flood
darkness at one with darkness, up and down
and sideways utterly dark, so there is no direction
any more.

And the little ship is there; yet she is gone.
She is not seen, for there is nothing to see her by.
She is gone! gone! and yet
somewhere she is there.
Nowhere!

(11. 65-74)

The poem, in which the poet is obviously using with success all those perceptual techniques he has acquired over the years, culminates dramatically in the bewilderment of seeing or not seeing. In this crucial moment of transition darkness seems to be really black and non-perceptual for once, and the poet is revealingly lost and dejected. Whereas up to this point rhythm has been regular and composed, speed now increases as confusion grows, lines shorten, repetitions follow in breathless succession and punctuation marks proliferate. The literally "dead end", the moment of complete oblivion, almost behind articulation, is expressed by the negation of physicality and visibility; the only sense is absence, except for the awareness of absolute darkness. The rhythm proceeds to a *rallentando* and finally comes to a full stop with something like a fermata at the end of section VIII.

The ensuing resurrection, with its intrinsic physical quality, is not sudden, but a process like the voyage to oblivion, and starts softly, hesitatingly, as a pale thread "separates itself on the blackness". The obvious way to imagine and express this rebirth is through the senses and

in perceptual terms:

Is it illusion? or does the pallor fume
A little higher?
Ah wait, wait, for there's the dawn,
the cruel dawn of coming back to life
out of oblivion.

Wait, wait, the little ship
drifting, beneath the deathly ashy grey
of a flood-dawn.

Wait, wait! even so, a flush of yellow
and strangely, O chilled wan soul, a flush of rose.

A flush of rose, and the whole thing starts again.

(11. 86-96)

The halting verse gradually gains in speed and volume, as confidence grows with the return of light and colour.

Finally, in the last section, the sonorous clarity of the beginning is recaptured.

To conclude, I should like to draw attention to another poem on death, "Shadows" (*CP*, pp. 726-27), less known and less dramatic and spectacular than "The Ship of Death", yet extremely beautiful and moving — not like the latter poem because of its direct if subdued admission of faltering moments which might sound desperate if the voice were louder, but because of the unbroken assurance of a man who knows that he is going to die. "Shadows" traces the same cyclic motion its its single stanzas as "The Ship of Death", reflecting the pagan manner of thought, which allows "the mind to move in cycles, or to flit here and there over a cluster of images", and stands in contrast to "our own manner of on-and-on-and-on, from a start to a finish".

Lawrence's concept of rebirth implies this motion, where "one cycle finished, we can drop or rise to another level, and be in a new world at once".¹⁰

Unlike "The Ship of Death", "Shadows" is a soliloquy, and the tone is not hortatory, but calm and serene, and has been rightly termed "gravely religious", considering the strong element of faith inherent in it (Gilbert, p. 315). It is, in fact, a fourfold credo. Accordingly, the poem has a clear symmetrical structure: it consists of four stanzas (the last subdivided into three parts), each stanza beginning with the anaphorical "and if" and closing with "then I...(still)". The metre which follows a predominantly iambic pattern (with Lawrencian variations and irregularities, of course) combines with alliterations, identical or half rhymes and consonances to convey the harmonious peacefulness of the message. The central metaphor of the poem, which appears in the first stanza and is taken up again in the last, is that of the poet as a flower that bursts into bloom again after the long moonless night of winter. The shadows precede the light of renewal, as death and oblivion precede the morning, and they also hide the moon's healing rays (cf. "Invocation to the Moon", *CP*, p. 696, where the moon "will give me back my lost limbs/and my lost white fearless breast/and set me again on moon-remembering feet/a healed, whole man, O Moon!"). The poet conceives himself again as the "wintry tree"; as the shadows envelop him layer by layer, and eyesight is lost, they become tangible, audible, and finally

turn to silence, to a silence which is basically creative, dynamic, where his "life is moving still" (as the poet in the whole poem is "walking still with God"). The verse with its enjambements reflects this motion. Finally, after an exceedingly personal passage, one of the few instances in which the poet speaks directly of illness and physical deterioration, his faith in a kind of rebirth is explicitly and insistently proclaimed. Whereas even the key terms in the process of death and rebirth, the "low, sad song", "heart seems dead", and "new, strange flowers" (all standing out from the rest with their three strong stresses) can yet be traditionally scanned to fit the basic iambic pattern, this is impossible in the final expressions of renewal in the last line: the semantic relevance of this conspicuous deviation from the metrical pattern is evident in the central vision "a new morning, a new man".

And if tonight my soul may find her peace
in sleep, and sink in good oblivion,
and in the morning wake like a new-opened flower
then I have been dipped again in God, and new-created.

And if, as weeks go round, in the dark of the moon
my spirit darkens and goes out, and soft, strange gloom
pervades my movements and my thoughts and words
then I shall know that I am walking still
with God, we are close together now the moon's in
shadow.

And if, as autumn deepens and darkens
I feel the pain of falling leaves, and stems that break
in storms
and trouble and dissolution and distress
and then the softness of deep shadows folding, folding
around my soul and spirit, around my lips
so sweet, like a swoon, or more like the drowse of a
low, sad song
singing darker than the nightingale, on, on to the
solstice

and the silence of short days, the silence of the year,
the shadow,
then I shall know that my life is moving still
with the dark earth, and drenched
with the deep oblivion of earth's lapse and renewal.

And if, in the changing phases of man's life
I fall in sickness and in misery
my wrists seem broken and my heart seems dead
and strength is gone, and my life
is only the leavings of a life:

and still, among it all, snatches of lovely oblivion,
and snatches of renewal
odd, wintry flowers upon the withered stem, yet new,
strange flowers
such as my life has not brought forth before, new
blossoms of me—

then I must know that still
I am in the hands [of] the unknown God,
he is breaking me down to his own oblivion
to send me forth on a new morning, a new man.

NOTES

¹D.H.Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, pp. 76-77.

²Keith Alldritt, *The Visual Imagination of D.H. Lawrence*, p. 15.

³D.H.Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, p. 119.

⁴For an excellent discussion of this aspect see Sandra Gilbert, *Acts of Attention*, p. 274 ff.

⁵D.H.Lawrence, *Phoenix II*, p. 606.

⁶D.H.Lawrence, "Introduction to these Paintings", *Phoenix*, p. 556.

⁷See *Apocalypse*, p. 86.

⁸Chaman, Nahal, "The Colour Ambience in Lawrence's Early and Later Poetry", *The D.H.Lawrence Review*, 6 (1975), p. 150.

⁹R.G.N.Salgado, "The Poetry of D.H.Lawrence", p. 236.

¹⁰D.H.Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, p. 87.

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